DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 446 156 UD 033 507

AUTHOR Decker, Larry E.; Decker, Virginia A.
TITLE Engaging Families and Communities: Pathways to Educational Success.
INSTITUTION Decker (Larry E.) and Associates, Boca Raton, FL.
SPONS AGENCY National Community Education Association, Alexandria, VA.; Florida Atlantic Univ., Boca Raton.
ISBN ISBN-0-93088-19-4
PUB DATE 2000-00-00
NOTE 124p.; "With Mary Richardson Boo, Gloria A. Gregg and Joanne Erickson."
AVAILABLE FROM National Community Education Association, 3929 Old Lee Highway, Suite 91-A, Fairfax, VA 22030 ($23.95). Tel: 703-359-8973; Fax: 703-359-0972; e-mail: ncea@ncea.com.
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom (055)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC05 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Achievement; *Community Involvement; Educational Change; Elementary Secondary Education; *Family Programs; *Parent Participation; *Partnerships in Education
IDENTIFIERS Reform Efforts

ABSTRACT

This book is intended to help educators weave some of the best ideas for creating and maintaining family and community engagement into a comprehensive family-school-community involvement program tailored to their own communities. The goal of such an initiative must be to help all children succeed academically so that they can live productive lives in health communities. The chapters of this book address various aspects of a comprehensive home-school-community involvement plan. They present a rationale for addressing particular areas; relevant research; suggested considerations, examples, and tips; and a list of references and Web sites for further information. The chapters are: (1) "Family and Community Involvement: Principles and Strategies"; (2) "Understanding Your Community"; (3) "The Essential Role of Communities"; (4) "Home and School as Partners"; (5) "School-Community Collaboration"; (6) "School Public Relations: Bridging the Gap"; (7) "Dealing with Political Realities"; (8) "School Safety and Crisis Management"; (9) "Planning and Evaluating a Comprehensive Home-School-Community Relations Program"; and (10) "Making Friends before You Need Them." Two appendixes list contact information for organizational and associations and Web sites by major focus or content area. Each chapter contains references. (SLD)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 446 156

ENGAGING FAMILIES & COMMUNITIES

pathways to educational success

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

L Decker
Nat Community Education Association
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

Larry E. Decker, Virginia A. Decker & Associates
Sponsored by the National Community Education Association in cooperation with Florida Atlantic University

UD033507

Engaging Families and Communities
Pathways to Educational Success

By
Larry E. Decker and Virginia A. Decker
with
Mary Richardson Boo, Gloria A. Gregg and Joanne Erickson

Sponsored by the National Community Education Association
in cooperation with Florida Atlantic University

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many colleagues helped with various phases of this publication, including the field review process, recommendation of materials, and preparation of the manuscript. We would especially like to thank:

Michele Acker-Hocevar, Associate Professor, Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, Florida

Amy Anderson, Family Resource Coordinator, Brooksville, Florida

Daniel Cady, Executive Director, National Center for Community Education, Flint, Michigan

Ursula Ellis, Director of Communications, National Community Education Association, Fairfax, Virginia

Sue Ferguson, Executive Director, National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education, Washington, D.C.

Francis Funk, Associate Professor, Florida State University, Tallahassee, Florida

Warlene Gary, Director, Center for Revitalization of Urban Education, National Education Association, Washington, D.C.

Robert Grimesey, Director of Grants and Partnerships, Rockingham County, Virginia

Albert Holliday, Editor-in-Chief, The Journal of Educational Relations, Camp Hill, Pennsylvania

Vasil Kerensky, Professor, Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, Florida

Sherry Mullett, State Director of Community Education, Ohio Department of Education, Columbus, Ohio

Steve Parson, Associate Professor, Virginia Tech University, Falls Church, Virginia

Jessica Pruitt, Graduate Assistant, Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, Florida

Steve Stark, Professor, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas

Evelyn Tracey, Graduate Assistant, Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, Florida

Larry Winecoff, Professor, University of South Carolina, Columbia, South Carolina

Robert Witherspoon, Research Management Corporation, Washington, D.C.

Larry Yates, Coordinator, ERIC - Urban Education, Columbia University, New York

ORDERING INFORMATION
National Community Education Association
3929 Old Lee Highway, Suite 91-A
Fairfax, Virginia 22030
e-mail: ncea@ncea.com
fax: 703-359-0972
phone: 703-359-8973

©2000 DECKER & ASSOCIATES
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

ISBN: 0-930388-19-4

PREFACE

Many Americans worry about what they see as a growing gulf between the American public and its schools. Bradley (Education Week on the Web 1999) has pointed out several troubling trends that indicate a fraying relationship among families, schools, and communities:

- About 25 percent of households have school-age children. At the same time, public schools are serving a diverse mix of students whose needs are greater than any who have come before.

- The public's faith in public institutions is withering. Many people distrust government and are reluctant to pay taxes to support systems including education systems that appear to be unsuccessful.

- Growing support for alternatives to public schools including charter schools and voucher systems raise questions about Americans' belief in the traditional role of public schools in our democracy and the concept of public education as the glue binding a diverse society.

Despite continued evidence of public disenchantment with public education, educators across the nation are implementing ideas and strategies—some simple, some complex that are making a difference, not only in children's lives, but in the health and well-being of communities. They are finding ways to keep "the public" in public education by involving families in the education of children. As Schorr (1997) put it, "[T]he United States is rich in resources, ideas, and even goodwill.... Virtually all the elements that are part of the solution can be identified and described; they are a reality today, somewhere in this country."

This book is intended to help educators weave some of the best ideas for creating and maintaining family and community engagement into a comprehensive family-school-community involvement program tailored to their own communities. The goal of such an initiative must be to help all children succeed academically so that they can live productive lives in healthy communities. This ambitious, optimistic goal has always been a part of the American dream.

Larry and Virginia Decker

REFERENCES

Bradley, A. 1999. "Divided We Stand," *Education Week on the Web*. www.edweek.org/ew/vol16/10publi1.h16.

Schorr, L. B. 1997. *Common Purpose: Strengthening Families and Neighborhoods to Rebuild America*. New York: Anchor Books, Doubleday.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE

Chapter I. Family and Community Involvement: Principles And Strategies 9
Making the Decision 9
Responding to the Challenge 9
Family-Community Involvement Strategies 10
Creating a Comprehensive Home-School-Community Involvement Plan 11
Reference 11

Chapter II. Understanding Your Community 13
A Definition of Community 13
Healthy Communities 14
Demographics and Socioeconomic Variables 15
The Status of Children and Families in America 16
The Potential. 18
References 18

Chapter III. The Essential Role of Communities 21
Repairing the Bond 21
Building Communities from the Inside Out 21
A School System for the New Millennium 25
A Tested Method for Building Community 27
Community Schools 28
Full-Service Schools 28
21st Century Community Learning Centers. 28
A Solemn Conclusion— and a Warning 29
References 30

Chapter IV. Home and School as Partners 31
Benefits of Family Involvement 31
Standards and Models of Parent Involvement 32
Why Are There So Few Comprehensive Programs? 37
Characteristics of Successful Partnerships 38
Getting Started. 40
Title I as a Tool for Parent Involvement 41
Overcoming Barriers to Family Involvement 42
Involving the "Hard-to-Reach" Parent 44
Preparing Educators for Family Involvement 44
Training Materials 48
References 48

Chapter V. School-Community Collaboration 51
Working with the Community 52
Collaborative Leadership 53
Establishing Relationships 55
Barriers to Collaboration. 56
The Partnership Continuum. 57
Types of Educational Partnerships. 60
Other School Community Partnerships 65
Collaboration: A New Kind of Involvement 66
References 67

Chapter VI. School Public Relations Bridging the Gap 69
The Heart of the Problem 69
Defining School Public Relations 70
Why School Public Relations? 70
Communication 71
The Internal Public 72
The External Public 73
Why Image Matters 73
Marketing Communications 74
Working with the News Media 75
Key Communicators 77
Taking Advantage of Technology 78
Getting a Public Relations Program Underway 79
Staffing the Program 79
Stepping Forward 80
References 81

Chapter VII. Dealing with Political Realities 83
Politics 83
Power 84
Policy Making 85
Discovering the Community Power Structure 87
Needed Political Skills 87
Finding Common Ground 88
Strategies for Achieving Change 88
Communications 88
Dealing with Criticism 89
When Things Get Out of Hand 90
Politics and Academic Success 90
References 91

Chapter VIII. School Safety and Crisis Management 93
Issues Management 93
School Safety 93
Planning for Safety 95
Discipline 95
A Planned Response to Crisis 96
School and Community Working Together 96
References 97

Chapter IX. Planning and Evaluating a Comprehensive Home-School-Community Relations Program 99
Strategic Planning 99
Comprehensive Planning 100
Community Planning 100
Internal Systems Planning 101
The Basic Steps in Planning 101
Evaluation: An Outcomes Orientation 102
Some Techniques and Tools in Evaluation 103
Achieving a Common Purpose 106
References 106

Chapter X. Making Friends Before You Need Them **107**
Wooing the Public 107
Tapping the Potential. 109
Summing Up 109
References 110

Appendices **111**
Organizations and Associations Contact Information 111
Websites by Major Focus or Content Area 117

About the Authors **123**

CHAPTER I
FAMILY AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT: PRINCIPLES AND STRATEGIES

Educators have been blamed for falling test scores, increases in school violence, and rising dropout rates; for a shortage of good teachers; and for a lack of basic skills in too many public school graduates. The crisis in confidence in the 1990s has been more painful and prolonged than the one that followed the Soviet launch of sputnik in 1957.

Almost everyone agrees that the United States needs strong schools, literate and law-abiding citizens, and competitive workers for the global economy. The goal of improving public schools is as controversial as apple pie. But designing an effective curriculum is complicated by limitations on local resources and qualified personnel, and by legislative mandates. Most educational experts agree that effective responses require cooperation among the schools themselves and the communities they serve. What is needed is a comprehensive plan for a cooperative venture in which home, school, and community work together to improve public education.

MAKING THE DECISION

Family and community are historically the pillars of public education as it has evolved in the United States. Schools' responsibility has been to transmit the knowledge that would prepare children to assume places in their communities as productive workers and responsible citizens. In turn, families and communities would supply the financial, moral, and practical support that would enable schools to fulfill their mission. But in the last decade, economic pressures, national attention to educational concerns, increasing acceptance of the goals of lifelong learning, community involvement, and multi-sector cooperation have created a new environment in which to view home-school-community involvement.

Most educators agree that it is time to abandon adversarial relationships and to accept responsibility for helping to address community needs and concerns. The result has been that almost every public school system in America has developed activities and programs intended to increase home-school-community cooperation.

This has not been an easy process for many educators. Some are reluctant to share power or to delegate certain responsibilities. Others focus on the loss of control that accompanies shared decision making rather than on the benefits that derive from community input and advice. Most educators realize that inviting broad-based community participation in planning and decision making and broadening the traditional role of the school in community life are likely to increase conflict. They know that encouraging collaboration in order to use community resources efficiently and to coordinate service delivery will raise expectations.

Educators who are serious about improving public education must weigh possible problems against possible benefits. In an increasing number of schools and school districts, educators—administrators and teachers—have decided that the benefits to be gained far outweigh any potential problems. They have seen that a comprehensive home-school-community involvement plan increases student achievement and results in greater academic accountability, better attendance rates, and improved school climate. Other important benefits include an enhanced quality of community life; greater community support, including more resources for educational programs; more positive interaction among diverse groups; and an improved climate for communication within the community.

RESPONDING TO THE CHALLENGE

When the goal of creating a cooperative venture is used to guide home-school-community involvement efforts, public schools are operated with a commitment to the idea that they belong to the community. Professional educators and staff receive training to increase their skills in enlisting family and community support. School curricula are designed to incorporate a variety of involvement relationships and activities among schools, families, students, community members, businesses and industry, and local organizations and agencies.

Making the decision to create a cooperative relationship necessitates making the decision to

make some changes in the roles of school administrators and teachers. School administrators must change some practices that have become commonplace and work conscientiously to create a productive team of staff, parents, students, and other stakeholders. Dwyer (1998) suggests that administrators:

- Work side by side with teachers and staff in the training and development needed to make necessary changes.
- Empower teachers by including them in the design of curriculum and in the decision-making process, including the allocation of financial resources.
- Maintain an open-door policy for students, teachers, and community members, including rescheduling some traditional meeting times.
- Clearly state expectations for cooperation among and between teachers and staff.
- Confront disengaged teachers and empower staff to intervene in peer difficulties when appropriate.
- Support teachers and staff who are willing to take risks associated with change.
- Provide strong leadership in areas that emphasize community values.
- Reward efforts to increase cooperative working relationships in meaningful ways, such as providing release time, recognition, space, materials, and funds.

Dwyer also points out important changes in the teaching role that may be uncomfortable for some teachers—becoming more of a guide rather than authority in content areas, for example, and questioning the effectiveness of their own teaching practices. He suggests that teachers:

- Treat students as well as other teachers and parents as peers in community-building efforts.
- Enact classroom policies that reflect an understanding of children's needs and a willingness to share power.
- Design curriculum that is both relevant to students' lives and needs and meets state requirements.
- Try to convey to students the importance and value of knowledge, and to foster a joy in learning, especially if students' cultural environment promotes negative attitudes toward education.

FAMILY-COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT STRATEGIES

The ultimate goal of a comprehensive home-school-community involvement plan is the creation of a responsive support system for collaborative action to address educational concerns, quality-of-life issues of community members, and specialized needs. The following strategies provide a framework for developing such a cooperative venture.

Strategy 1. Encourage increased use of community resources and volunteers to augment the educational curricula.

Every community has human, physical, and financial resources that can be used to enrich and expand traditional education programs. Community resources and volunteers have been used to develop school volunteer programs, expand curricular options, field and study trips, peer tutoring, student-based enterprises, and experiential learning.

Strategy 2. Develop educational partnerships between schools and public and private service providers, business and industry, and civic and social service organizations.

Complex and interrelated social and economic problems create a broad array of service needs in many communities and meeting them effectively requires more resources than any single agency or organization can provide. This strategy encourages the development of educational partnerships that cooperate in the use of available resources, avoiding unnecessary duplication. Such partnerships might focus on childcare and latchkey programs, drug education and substance abuse efforts, intensive programs to address literacy and academic competencies, assistance to at-risk youth and minorities, community economic development, internships and work-study programs, and career awareness.

Strategy 3. Use public education facilities as community service centers for meeting the educational, social, health, cultural, and recreational needs of all ages and sectors of the community.

The fact that community attitudes and support affect the schools' ability to carry out their mission to educate all children necessitates that educators consider the needs and

concerns of non-parents. This strategy encourages opening school buildings on a planned, organized basis at hours beyond the regular school day. It takes advantage of the strong support community centers generally receive, as well as the economic benefits of more efficient use.

Strategy 4. Develop an environment that fosters lifelong learning.

This strategy advocates the promotion of learning as a lifelong process. It recognizes that much learning takes place without formal instruction, both inside and outside the school setting. It encourages the development of lifelong education programs to meet learning needs that change over a lifetime, including the need for new skills and knowledge. Possible programs and activities include early childhood education, extended-day and enrichment programs for school-age children, adult education, vocational training and retraining programs, leisure time activities, and intergenerational programs.

Strategy 5. Establish community involvement processes in educational planning and decision making.

The total community has a responsibility in the mission of educating all of the community members. Community members therefore have a right and a duty to participate in determining community needs, deciding priorities, and selecting the most appropriate allocation of resources. This cyclical process, concerned with evaluation and change as well as with initial planning, takes advantage of a basic fact of human behavior: individuals who participate in planning and decision making develop feelings of ownership in the outcome. Encouraging broad-based involvement capitalizes on another principle: in general, the greater the number and diversity of people involved in the planning, development, implementation, and evaluation of educational opportunities, the greater the likelihood that needs will be met and that support for education will be developed and maintained. Involvement opportunities range from participation in ongoing community advisory councils to membership on ad hoc advisory task forces and special study committees.

Strategy 6. Provide a responsive, community-based support system for collective action among all educational and community agencies to address both community quality-of-life issues and special needs.

This strategy recognizes the complexity of many problems and underscores the fact that their resolution may require cooperative use of resources. Seeking the involvement of other agencies can help schools address such social, health, educational, and economic issues as drug and substance abuse, housing, public safety and crime prevention, at-risk youth, violence and vandalism, teen pregnancy, and racial and minority concerns.

Strategy 7. Develop a system that facilitates home-school-community communication.

Research shows that schools that involve all their publics and keep them informed have community support; those that fail to reach beyond parents do not. Effective home-school-community communications go beyond news releases, speeches, newsletters, and open houses to include use of the media, home visitation by teachers and administrators, meet-the-community programs, school displays in the community, and programs conducted away from the school site.

These strategies have overlapping characteristics and functions. Taken together, they form the outline of an action plan.

CREATING A COMPREHENSIVE HOME-SCHOOL-COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT PLAN

The chapters that follow address various aspects of a comprehensive home-school-community involvement plan. They present a rationale for addressing particular areas; relevant research; suggested considerations, examples, and tips; and a list of references and websites for more information.

REFERENCE

Dwyer, M. D. 1998. *Strengthening Community in Education: A Handbook for Change.* www.newmaine.com/community/index.

CHAPTER II
UNDERSTANDING YOUR COMMUNITY

What happens in a school affects the community, and what happens in the community affects the school. If teachers and school administrators expect to be successful in their primary mission of educating the community's children, they need to know a great deal about the community and the families from which the children come.

That proposition is not as simple as it sounds. For one thing, no two communities are exactly alike. For another, different communities influence schools in different ways. And finally, both communities and families are constantly changing in a variety of ways, some of them highly gratifying and others thoroughly discouraging.

The urge for a quick fix is sometimes irresistible. In a search for easy answers to complex problems, some school critics have been willing to overlook a single undeniable fact: educational problems reflect community and family problems in all their complexity, diversity, and intractability. Even a brief examination of the demographics of American society at the end of the 20th century shows the enormity of the challenge schools face. To be effective, educators must develop an understanding of the demographic and socioeconomic conditions that exist in the communities in which they work; only then can they define their own roles in building the kind of healthy community in which learning is valued by all.

A DEFINITION OF COMMUNITY

How does a school define its community? A generation ago, the answer was relatively easy. A community is "a population aggregate, inhabiting a contiguous delimitable area, and having a set of basic service institutions; it is conscious of its local unity" (Seay and Crawford 1954). Today, this definition would be likely to apply to only small schools in rural areas.

Drawing on the work of Israel Rubin, Neff (1999) proposes a definition and a way of looking at the characteristics of a community that may be helpful to educators. Rubin suggested that a community does not have to be a specific geographic location and does not have to provide for the daily needs of community members. Rather a community's "main function is to mediate between the individual and society and...people could relate to their societies through both geographic and nongeographic substructures or communities." Five characteristics are necessary for a community to mediate between an individual and society:

- *Size of community.* It must be both small enough to give people a sense of community, and large enough to help them feel they are part of the larger social structure.
- *Focus on institution.* It must focus on a key institutional setting and on an area of central importance to culture so that it conveys to members a sense of significant incorporation in society via membership in the organization.
- *Stability of community.* It must have relative stability without too much turnover and be able to convey a sense of community or relay a community's feelings about its own significance.
- *Social structure.* It must have some concrete social structure—more than a community of interest—and people must be able to interact and identify with each other.
- *Significant interaction.* Significant primary (face-to-face) and secondary (mass media) communication must be intertwined in the community and there must be feelings of congeniality and an opportunity for community members to participate in social processes.

In *Strengthening Community in Education*, Dwyer (1998) uses Bellah's definition of community as "a group of people who are socially independent, who participate together in discussion and decision making, and who share certain practices that both define community and are nurtured by it." He points out that within a community there are "generally accepted rules and social norms that protect, respect and please members of the community" and that a "true community requires its participants to engage in the working of a society consensually." Dwyer agrees that membership within a community is about meeting basic needs; each need is intertwined with the purpose of the community.

HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

What is a healthy community? Dwyer suggests that examining the way a community provides for individuals' basic needs can give an understanding of what constitutes a healthy community. In an ideal community, basic needs are purposefully and assertively met; this contributes to the functionality of the community itself.

Dwyer acknowledges disagreement over what constitutes basic needs, but suggests general agreement on all or some of the following:

- *Security.* The essence of security lies in building networks of trust through honest and sustained relationships. A community can establish shared values and social norms that resist actions and circumstances that might harm its members. It can provide security through the very basic assurance of support; individual members notice others' needs and provide assistance when possible.
- *Adventure.* The need for adventure manifests itself in a desire for new experiences, drama in one's life, and a sense of anticipation and hope for the future. A healthy community allows new ideas, encourages exploration of interests, allows members to make changes in the course of their lives, and nurtures the need as a way to create a stronger sense of self confidence and optimism.
- *Freedom.* The need for freedom involves having and making choices and being in control of one's own destiny. A healthy community shares ideals and principles but does not demand uniformity of experiences, interpretations, and choices. The community is, by design, willing to change in response to innovation and the beliefs of its members.
- *Exchange.* The need for exchange is the desire to share information, love, concern, praise, encouragement, and ideas between caring parties. A healthy community encourages cooperation and respect and policies that support exchange.
- *Power.* This need involves "power to" not "power over." A healthy community provides its members with a real sense that their actions and decisions affect the common good; the community as a whole is authentically reliant upon the contributions of individuals.
- *Expansion/Creation.* This is the need to build, to add, to create, and to grow. A healthy community provides a supportive atmosphere in which individuals have room to shape their lives and the direction of the community and are in turn strengthened by the skills and achievements of community members.
- *Acceptance.* The need for acceptance has as much to do with accepting others and our own changing circumstances as it does with the need to belong. A healthy community offers an atmosphere that promotes empathy, forgiveness, understanding, tolerance, and encouragement among its residents.
- *Expression.* Individuals need to have their presence and contributions seen, heard, and felt by others. A healthy community encourages various forms of articulation and provides forums that encourage and accept expression.

Why are some communities more effective than others in dealing with their problems? David Mathews, president of the Charles F. Kettering Foundation, says that Foundation studies have identified *shared knowledge* as the key to effective communities (Decker and Boo 1998). Effective communities are better educated as a community—meaning they are good at educating the whole community about the community's business. An effective community appears to have more than just facts: it knows what the facts mean in the lives of the people who make up the community. What an effective community knows is not just personal knowledge; it is shared knowledge. An effective community makes a distinction between *government* officials and *public* leaders. Mathews believes that one of the most important things leadership organizations can do to increase the effectiveness of their communities is to develop leadership that is truly public.

Another approach to examining the health of a community is to measure its competence. Rotenberg (1986) says that a competent community:

- Collaborates on identifying problems and needs.
- Actively seeks diverse input.
- Establishes consensus on goals and priorities.
- Agrees on strategies for meeting agreed-upon goals.
- Has strong psychological identification.
- Allows individuals to play significant roles.
- Has a record of positive results.
- Has members with effective communication skills.
- Uses outside expertise effectively while retaining community control and direction.

To determine whether a community is healthy or not requires an understanding of the various parts of the community that make up the whole. Educators need the following types of information in order to work effectively within a community:

- Population data and characteristics.
- Customs and traditions.
- Characteristics and organization of the political system and the power brokers (both formal and informal).
- Communication channels.
- Significant community groups andorganizations.
- Economic conditions.
- Patterns of employment and unemployment.
- Social structures, tensions, and problems that affect the learner and the school.
- Community resources and services.
- School-community relationships.
- Geographic strengths and weaknesses.

DEMOGRAPHICS AND SOCIOECONOMIC VARIABLES

One way to begin to understand a community is to look at the trends and issues that will have an impact on it over time. For example:

- What do "majority" and "minority" mean? This is a socioeconomic as well as a racial question.
- Approximately one third of all children in the U.S. are economically disadvantaged.
- The support base for education is eroding:
  – Less than 25 percent of U. S. households have school-aged children.
  – American society is aging as the first baby boomers approach 60.
- Education systems must make proactive efforts to connect community with school.
- Potential exists for intergenerational conflict:
  – In 1940, there were 17 workers for every Social Security recipient.
  – In 1990, there were 3 workers for every Social Security recipient.
  – In 2000, there will be 2 workers for every Social Security recipient.
- More coordinated social services will be needed, and schools will be expected to fill voids.
- Growing numbers of working women will mean a growing need for comprehensive child-care services.
- Acknowledgment that public education is a right and a responsibility of all citizens will require a broader definition of education.

Hodgkinson (1992) examines these and other trends and issues and poses many thought-provoking questions:

- In 2010, four states (New York, Texas, California, and Florida) will have about one third of the nation's youth; more than half will be "minority." The *real* minority will be non-Hispanic white youth in these key states. What will we call "minorities" when they constitute more than half the population? How will these states interact with Maine, which will have 3 percent minority youth in 2010?
- In the 1960s, housing moved to the suburbs. In the 1980s, so did everything else: jobs, churches, colleges, movies, shopping. How will cities survive if success is defined as moving to a suburb? What will bring middle-income people back to the cities? Many "urban" problems—crime, drugs, poverty, violence—will continue to spread to the suburbs. What is the best way to govern a metro area that includes both cities and their now-dominant suburbs?
- About 82 percent of all children have working mothers. Business and government must respond to the rapidly increasing demand for child care. About 60 percent of all children will spend some time with a single parent before reaching age 18, making the single parent family the new "typical American family."
- The U.S. population is aging rapidly. There will be 65 million people over age 65 by 2020. Many will have one year of retirement for every year of work. Children under age 18 (34 percent of our total population in 1970) are 25 percent in 2000. Yet, even as children become increasingly scarce, as many as 30 percent are at serious risk of failure in school and in life.
- As more African-Americans, Hispanics, and Asians move into the middle class, many formerly racial problems become issues of race *and* class. The single factor that holds most children back is poverty, regardless of race.
- The U.S. population increased 10 percent between 1980 and 1990; the prison population by 139 percent. Prisoners cost taxpayers more than $20,000 per individual annually; 80 percent are high school dropouts. We now lead the world in the percentage of our population behind bars. One prisoner consumes about the same amount of public money as *six* children in Head Start programs.

- The "middle" of our society is declining, while the numbers of rich and poor are increasing. We are creating two workforces: one in minimum-wage jobs, the other in well-paying jobs. For every new job created for a computer programmer, eight new jobs are created for food service workers. This is leading to an information-rich and information-poor split in our society.
- Instead of worrying about the test scores of U.S. students compared to those of Asian students, we should be concerned about the scores of U.S. inner city students compared to those suburban students.

THE STATUS OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES IN AMERICA

By one estimate, only 6 percent of U.S. families fit the traditional image of working father, homemaker mother, and two children.

- In 1990, there were 6.6 million single-parent households headed by a female, an increase of 21.2 percent from 1980. There were about 1.2 million single-parent households headed by a male, an increase of 87.2 percent from 1980 (U. S. Census Bureau 1991).
- In 1990, 75 percent of mothers in the labor force had children aged 6-17; 60 percent had children under 6 (Children's Defense Fund 1998).
- From 1975 to 1996 single-parent families increased from 17 percent to 29 percent of all families (Annie E. Casey Foundation 1997).
- The number of children living with relatives with no parent in the home grew 75 percent in the first half of the 1990s. The number of children living with grandparents and without a parent increased 66 percent in the same period (Children's Defense Fund 1997).
- Among children who live in single-parent families, 63 percent who have unmarried mothers live in poverty; 34 percent with a divorced mother live in poverty. About 11 percent of children who live with both parents are in poverty (*U.S. News & World Report* 1992).
- Children in single-parent families are more likely to be suspended or expelled from school (17 percent with unmarried mothers, 11 percent with divorced mothers and 5 percent with both parents); to repeat a grade in school (33 percent with unmarried mothers, 23 percent with divorced mothers, and 13 percent with both parents); and to be on welfare for more than 10 years (39 percent with unmarried mothers and 14 percent with divorced mothers) (*U.S. News & World Report* 1992).
- Of children in juvenile correctional facilities, 56 percent had lived with one parent, 28 percent with both parents (*U.S. News & World Report* 1992).
- About 25 percent of children younger than six live in poverty; the rate rises to 27 percent for children younger than three (Children's Defense Fund 1994).
- Some estimates place the number of children born in the U.S. each year with fetal alcohol syndrome at 12,000 (Institute of Medicine 1995).

In *Years of Promise*, the Carnegie Corporation (1996) reported:

- One in five American children (14.7 million) lives in poverty.
- During 1995, fewer than half of all three-to-five-year-olds with annual family incomes of $40,000 or less were enrolled in preschool, compared to 82 percent from families with incomes of more than $75,000.
- Fewer than half of eligible low-income three- and four-year-olds receive Head Start services. No more than one in six three-to-five-year-olds of all income levels attends a child care center that can be considered "high quality."

Cleveland State University's Urban Child Research Center (1997) reported these sobering facts about children in America:

1 in 2 preschoolers has a mother in the labor force.
1 in 2 will live with a single parent at some point in childhood.
1 in 2 never completes a single year of college.
1 in 3 is born to unmarried parents.
1 in 4 is born poor.
1 in 4 is born to a mother who did not graduate from high school.
1 in 5 is born to a mother who did not receive prenatal care in the first three months of pregnancy.
1 in 6 has a foreign-born mother.
1 in 7 has no health insurance.
1 in 7 has a worker in the family but is still poor.
1 in 8 is born to a teen mother.
1 in 8 never graduates from high school.

1 in 9 is born into a family living at less than half the poverty level ($6,079 for a family of three in 1995).

1 in 12 has a disability.

1 in 14 had low birth weight.

1 in 21 is born to a mother who received late or no prenatal care.

1 in 25 lives with neither parent.

1 in 610 will be killed by a gun before age 20.

The Children's Defense Fund (1998) translated many of these same statistics into a profile. Every day in America, CDF says:

3	*young people under age 25 die from HIV infection.*
6	*children commit suicide.*
13	*children are homicide victims.*
14	*children are killed by firearms.*
81	*babies die.*
280	*children are arrested for violent crimes.*
443	*babies are born to mothers who had late or no prenatal care.*
1,403	*babies are born to teen mothers.*
3,436	*babies are born to unmarried mothers.*
2,430	*babies are born into poverty.*
2,756	*children drop out of high school every school day.*
5,753	*children are arrested.*
8,470	*children are reported abused or neglected.*
11.3	*million children lack health insurance.*
14.5	*million children live in poverty.*

Each year since 1990, the Annie E. Casey Foundation has presented, in its *Kids Count Data Book*, a broad array of data intended to illuminate the status of America's children and assess their well-being. *Kids Count* provides ongoing benchmarks against which to evaluate efforts to improve the lives of children. As the Foundation explains, the 10 measures used do not capture the full range of conditions that shape children's lives, but do reflect a wide range of factors that affect their well-being and experiences across a range of developmental stages from birth through early adulthood. Since the data are consistent across states and over time, legitimate comparisons are possible. Each year, the *Kids Count Overview* focuses on a particular topic and the implications of the relevant data.

The 1993 report featured a "Vulnerable Family Index," identifying the three factors that put children at risk from birth: (1) the mother was under 20 when she had her first baby; (2) the mother had not completed high school when her first child was born; and (3) the parents of the first baby were not married.

The 1995 *Kids Count Overview*, "Fathers and Families," showed that in 1994, 24 percent of American children lived in mother-only families; factoring in the divorce rate, researchers estimated that before they grow up, more than half of today's children are likely to spend some of their childhood in a single-parent home. The report outlined the implications of those numbers. Children in father-absent families are five times more likely to be poor and about ten times more likely to be extremely poor. By definition, they are likely to have less parental time and supervision. Children of single mothers are twice as likely to drop out of high school and significantly more likely to end up in foster or group care and in juvenile justice facilities. Girls from single-parent families have a threefold greater risk of bearing children as unwed teenagers. And boys whose fathers are absent face a much higher probability of growing up unemployed, incarcerated, and uninvolved with their own children. The report also noted the growing body of research emphasizing the important role father involvement can play in the positive cognitive, emotional, and social development of both sons and daughters.

The 1996 report, *Child Poverty and the Working Poor*, stated:

> Although many factors put children at risk, nothing predicts bad outcomes for a kid more powerfully than growing up poor. ...Today fully one-quarter of the nation's population under age 6 lives in poverty. Taken together, these numbers add up to a U.S. child poverty rate that is among the highest in the developed world—a distinction that threatens not only the future for many of our kids, but also the future competitiveness of our nation in a global economy.

The 1997 *Kids Count Overview*, focused on success in school, states that improving the odds for children in low-income communities will require greater employment opportunities for parents, higher quality health care, formal and informal networks of adults who can assist in times of crisis, vibrant religious and social institutions, organized recreation, and safer streets. But it emphasized that "of all the community institutions that help children become capable adults, perhaps none is more important than school." The report continued:

Specifically, we can point to four ideas that have demonstrated that they can positively contribute to kids' success in school and overall development:

- preschool experiences that prepare children to learn;
- schools that are small enough to engage every child;
- high standards in curriculum, instruction, and assessment;
- strong, meaningful family participation; making education part of a larger community commitment to healthy youth and family development.

The 1999 report focused on the number of youth that are growing up "outside the continuing economic boom, hampered by extraordinarily difficult family conditions that are likely to rob them of their chances of success as adults."

> [T]he futures of 9.2 million American children—one in seven—are at serious risk due to a combination of four or more chronic family conditions. These factors include growing up in a single parent home, having parents with low educational attainment, living in poverty, having parents who are not in the work force, being dependent on welfare, and lacking health insurance.

The Casey Foundation uses a threshold of four or more family risk factors to locate the children that are of the highest risk of failure. Some of the report's key findings are:

- Some 26 percent of kids with four or more family risk factors were high school dropouts in 1998, compared to only 1 percent of kids with none of the risks.
- 16 percent of high-risk females ages 15 to 19 were teenage mothers, compared to only one-tenth of 1 percent of those with none of the risks. Nationally, 25 percent of high-risk kids are in rural areas, 44 percent in central cities, and 31 percent in suburbs.
- About one-third of identifiable high-risk kids, or about 3 million, live in poor central city neighborhoods.
- Nearly 30 percent of all Black children and nearly 25 percent of all Hispanic children are in the high-risk category, compared to only 6 percent of white children.

The report emphasizes that of the many complex variables that shape children's futures, none is more important in determining a child's chances in life than the contribution parents are able to make. The report adds, "combined disadvantages tend to be mutually reinforcing" and "[c]ommunity conditions can also be powerful subverters of family strength.... High levels of crime and violence and concentrated poverty severely undermine family life and make it all the more difficult to change circumstances."

THE POTENTIAL

Research shows that all children are born ready and willing to learn. The impact of the family on what happens to them next is huge—parents (or other caregivers) are in fact children's first teachers. If the first-teacher role takes a back seat, children suffer.

The Carnegie Corporation (1996) poignantly describes the potential of children:

> By age three or four, children have the ability to make daring cognitive leaps, to negotiate the slippery slopes of peer relationships, and to manage the emotional ups and downs that are part of everyday life. If all of us could see their agile minds as easily as we observe their physical agility, perhaps more Americans would believe that every one of these children can learn to levels that surpass any expectations that we might have for them. If we as a nation commit ourselves to their success, if we keep their promise, these children will astonish us.

The challenge to educators is not to divide up responsibilities, but to reconceptualize the role of schools and their relationship to home, community, and the larger society. The key in building an effective relationship is mutual respect. Developing respect may take work—on all sides.

REFERENCES

Annie E. Casey Foundation. 1993, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1999. *Kids Count Data Book*. Washington, DC: Center for the Study of Social Policy.

Carnegie Corporation. 1996. *Years of Promise*. New York.

Children's Defense Fund. 1994. *Wasting America's Future: Cost of Child Poverty*. Washington, DC.

Children's Defense Fund. 1992. *Falling by the Wayside: Children in Rural America*. Washington, DC.

Children's Defense Fund. 1991, 1998. *The State of America's Children*. Washington, DC.

Decker, L. E., and Boo, M. R. 1998. *Community Schools: Serving Children, Families and Communities*. Fairfax, VA: National Community Education Association.

Dwyer, M. D. 1998. *Strengthening Community in Education: A Handbook for Change*. www.newmaine.com/community/index.

Hodgkinson, H. 1992. *A Demographic Look at Tomorrow*. Washington, DC: Institute for Educational Leadership.

Hodgkinson, H. 1989. *The Same Client: The Demographics of Education and Service Delivery Systems*. Washington, DC: Institute for Educational Leadership.

Institute of Medicine, Study Committee. 1995. *Fetal Alcohol Syndrome: Diagnosis, Epidemiology Report*. Washington, DC.

Mathews, D. 1998. In Decker, L. E., and Boo, M. R., *Community Schools: Serving Children, Families, and Communities*. Fairfax, VA: National Community Education Association.

Neff, M. 1999. *Community*. www.coe.ufl.edu/courses/EdTech/Vault/Folk/Rubin.

Rotenberg, R. L. 1986. "Community Analysis Techniques: An Anthropologist's Perspective," in *Marketing Techniques for Schools Districts*, J. J. Lane, ed. Reston, VA: Association of School Business Officials International.

Seay, M. F., and Crawford, F. N. 1954. *The Community School and Community Self-Improvement*. Lansing, MI: Department of Public Instruction.

Urban Child Research Center. 1997. *The State of America's Children*. Cleveland State University, Spring.

U.S. Census Bureau, 1991. *Current Population Survey: Household and Family Characteristics*. Washington, DC.

U.S. News & World Report. June 8, 1992. "The War Over Family Values."

WEBSITES

Annie E. Casey Foundation
www.aecf.org
Kids Count Data Online
www.aecf.org/kidscount
Carnegie Corporation
www.carnegie.org
Child Trends
www.childtrends.org
Children's Defense Fund
www.childrensdefense.org
Children, Youth & Family
www.cyfc.umn.ed
Consortium Education Week on the Web
www.edweek.org
The State of the States
www.edweek.org/reports/qc97
National Center for Education Statistics
http://NCES.ed.gov
U.S. Department of Education, Research and Statistics
www.ed.gov/stats

CHAPTER III
THE ESSENTIAL ROLE OF COMMUNITIES

Since the 1983 publication of the landmark assessment of American schools, *A Nation at Risk*, public attention has focused as never before on our public school system. As the public has come to believe that the system is deficient and getting worse, blame has often been placed on teachers and administrators. But increasingly, both the public and professional educators are coming to the realization that children who come from families and communities that have overwhelming social problems present severe challenges to educators' ability to teach.

Historically, the importance of the community has been recognized in a number of educational improvement efforts. Educators have launched many initiatives to bring the community into the school, to take school programs and activities into the community, and to create communities of learning within the school itself. What many have failed to do is include the community in the planning and implementation of academic improvement efforts. A potential problem is that while the community's cooperation and collaboration are needed, they may not be easy to get.

REPAIRING THE BOND

A common theme is that communities must accept responsibility for children's education and be willing to help schools prepare students to be educated. Reporting on a series of Kettering Foundation research projects on the public and its relationship to public education, Mathews (1996) pointed out:

A healthy public life is essential to good schools.... Strong communities, with people banded and pulling together, are our last line of defense against the breakdown of families and society. And they are also an essential source of "social capital," a necessary form of reinforcement from outside the school that encourages students to learn.

But the Kettering studies also led to a disconcerting conclusion: the public and public schools are, in fact, moving apart. Not only must schools be improved, but the relationship between schools and community must be repaired.

Mathews suggests several steps for "putting the public back into public education."

- Step 1. *Reconstitute publics.* Public relationships emerge when people see a connection between what is happening to them and what is valuable to them. They form around a sense of common fate, interdependence, and overlapping purposes. They come alive in a willingness to take, and act together, and together judge the results.
- Step 2. *Reaffirm educational imperatives.* If people believe—as they say they do—that education is important to solving many of society's ills, from eliminating racism to strengthening the economy, to safeguarding the environment, then providing that education should become a community strategy, not a school strategy.
- Step 3. *Reconnect the public to its schools.* One of the first responsibilities of a democratic citizenry is to make decisions about public purposes and, with respect to education, to set the mission for schools within the context of public objectives.

BUILDING COMMUNITIES FROM THE INSIDE OUT

Economic and social issues—not only in cities, but in suburban and rural areas—have caused problems in defining a specific community and delineating ways to improve it. Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) examined ways to build a healthy community from the traditional needs-driven approach and from an alternative capacity-focused approach. They point out that the traditional approach, although it is the most used and commands the greatest financial and human resources, creates mental images of a needy, problematic community populated by deficient people. The result is that problems are addressed through deficiency-oriented programs, and community members begin to think of themselves as incapable of taking charge of their lives and their community's future. Other negative consequences include a fragmented approach to solving intertwined problems, policies more oriented to maintenance and survival than to development, and a deepening cycle of dependence on outside resources.

An alternative capacity-focused approach begins with a commitment to identify a community's assets and leads to the development of policies and activities based on the capacities, skills, and resources of people and their community. In addition to the problems associated with the traditional approach, two other factors argue for an alternative approach. One is the evidence that significant community development takes place only when community people are committed to the effort. The second is that the hope of getting significant outside help to develop a community's internal assets is dim.

The authors present a guide to building communities from the inside out, outlining the asset-based approach to community development and providing examples of successful community-building initiatives. They also answer the most frequently asked questions on the potential and limits of using the building-inside-out approach:

- *Will these internally focused strategies really work?* The obvious necessity is for citizens to use every resource at local command to create the future. There is clear evidence in developing societies that domination by outside plans and resources that overwhelm local initiatives and associations cause massive social and economic disasters. The same lesson can be learned about development efforts in the U.S. in which the designs of outsiders have been imposed on local communities.
- *Is there a danger that local communities and groups won't be inclusive? Aren't parochialism and discrimination problems in many local groups and associations?* Yes. The effort to create open communities has been, and will be, a never-ending struggle.
- *Aren't there some communities in which there is not much associational life among local citizens? What do you do then?* Communities vary greatly in the number and formality of local associations. In some, local citizens may not have had time to create them. In others, there are so many institutions to manage and serve the local residents that associational life may have atrophied for lack of function. Nevertheless, some informal associations may be doing critical community work, even if they do not have a name or officers. Community organizers must find, honor, and enhance the associational relationships already at work.

In mid-1995, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development jointly funded a project to broaden public understanding of community building and its implications. In a monograph, *Community Building Coming of Age* (1997), the researchers state:

> Community building cannot provide all of the jobs or other opportunities that will be needed to diminish poverty and social isolation in this country. But there are many case experiences showing that community building initiatives can make an important difference in people's lives; that they can enhance opportunities for those now impoverished and, probably more important, equip them much more powerfully to take advantage of opportunities that become available to them.

The researchers identified seven types of community-building efforts.

1. *Efforts focused on specific improvement initiatives* in a manner that reinforces values and builds social capital. Community builders spend most of their time working with their neighbors on productive activities. But they give emphasis to such broader objectives as building the friendships, trust, institutions, and capacity that form the social capital that is, in turn, essential to fundamentally strengthening the lives of families and individual human beings.
2. *Community-driven efforts with broad resident involvement.* "Community participation" is not enough. The community must play the central role in devising and implementing strategies for its own improvement. This does not mean that outside facilitators cannot help, or that community members cannot form partnerships with outside agencies to achieve specific goals, but neighborhood residents must feel that they "own" the improvement process.
3. *Comprehensive, strategic, and entrepreneurial efforts.* Successful community building often starts with an assessment of community assets and a brief planning phase, but it does not wait too long to move into action. It works entrepreneurially to identify and tackle one or two high-priority issues and produce some quick results because results build confidence and capacity. But as it does so, it is rethinking and fleshing out a broader long-term vision and strategy, reassessing priorities and opportunities, and laying the groundwork for other linked initiatives that will create a comprehensive agenda over time.

4. *Asset-based efforts.* Even distressed neighborhoods have a substantial number of assets. Identifying those assets and developing plans to build on them is a powerful community organizing device that, by evidencing opportunities to change things, motivates collaboration and commitment to action.
5. *Efforts tailored to neighborhood scale and conditions.* The core unit for community building should be a neighborhood. There are two reasons for this. First, the natural face-to-face interactions that support friendships and mutual trust among most residents do not work well much above the neighborhood scale. Second, even in the concentrated poverty areas of inner cities, neighborhood conditions vary substantially; planning only for larger areas is likely to miss nuances that may be critical to effective strategies.
6. *Efforts collaboratively linked to the broader society* to strengthen community institutions and enhance outside opportunities for residents. Community builders look proactively to end the devastating isolation of inner-city neighborhoods. They mount initiatives to prepare residents for work and link them to outside jobs, while at the same time trying to stimulate new business formation in the neighborhood. They look for opportunities to partner with outside institutions in ways that will serve neighborhood interests and strengthen internal institutions while helping outside institutions change their practices so that they become stronger partners, more sensitive to community interests.
7. *Efforts to consciously change institutional barriers and racism.* Community building is not simply a matter of strengthening the connection between mainstream economic, political, and social institutions and those neighborhoods that have become isolated; it also requires institutions to give up "business as usual." Commitment to the product draws participants beyond conventional barriers. The coming together may not be without conflict. But community building efforts bring the best skills of organization development and conflict resolution to bear, so that solutions, rather than blame, are the focus and parties see in their differences assets they can contribute to the common endeavor.

The challenge of identifying the key factors in community building that enhance the health and well-being of young people was undertaken by the Search Institute. The Institute contends (1998):

"[W]e have research to suggest that the [developmental] assets make a difference. If our society would invest more in the positive things young people need, then we could expect high yields (in terms of healthier youth) as young people become healthy, contributing members of families, communities, workplaces, and society."

The researchers identified critical influences on young people's growth and development and designated them as external or internal assets. The four categories of external assets focus on positive experiences provided to young people by individuals and institutions:

- *Support.* Young people need to experience support, care, and love from their families, neighbors, and many others. They need organizations and institutions that provide positive, supportive environments.
- *Empowerment.* Young people need to be valued by their community and have opportunities to contribute. For this to occur, they must be safe and feel secure.
- *Boundaries and expectations.* Young people need to know what is expected of them and whether activities and behaviors are "in bounds" or "out of bounds."
- *Constructive use of time.* Young people need constructive, enriching opportunities for growth through creative activities, youth programs, congregational involvement, and quality time at home.

The report also stresses the importance of internal assets. "There needs to be a similar commitment to nurturing the internalized qualities that guide choices and create a sense of centeredness, purpose, and focus. Indeed, shaping internal dispositions that encourage wise, responsible, and compassionate judgments is particularly important in a society that prizes individualism."

Four categories of internal assets are identified:

- *Commitment to learning.* Young people need to develop a lifelong commitment to education and learning.
- *Positive values.* Youth need to develop strong values that guide their choices.
- *Social competencies.* Young people need skills and competencies that equip them to make positive choices, build relationships, and succeed in life.
- *Positive identity.* Young people need a strong sense of their own power, purpose, worth, and promise.

One of the outcomes of the Presidents' Summit for America's Future in April 1997 was the formation of America's Promise—The Alliance for Youth, a national organization headed by General Colin Powell. The organization is dedicated to mobilizing the nation to ensure that children and youth have access to the fundamental resources they need to become successful adults. The Alliance identifies five functions of those fundamental resources:

- Mentor: establish an ongoing relationship with a caring adult—parent, mentor, tutor, or coach.
- Protect: create safe places and structured activities during non-school hours.
- Nurture: assure a healthy start.
- Prepare: ensure a marketable skill through effective education.
- Serve: provide an opportunity to give back through community service.

America's Promise is intended to serve as a national catalyst, urging states, counties, cities, and municipalities as well as public, private, and nonprofit organizations to focus their combined talents and resources on improving the lives of youth. Organizations—States of Promise, Communities of Promise, and Schools of Promise—have been formed; members are committed to bringing the goals of the Presidents' Summit to state, community, and school levels. A Community of Promise commits to:

- Engage a diverse community team to ensure that the needs of all its young people are known, that community resources are fully tapped, and that these resources are effectively and broadly delivered.
- Take responsibility for reaching a targeted number of young people at risk (the goal is to have communities target 10 percent).
- Secure commitments from all sectors in the community in order to provide the five fundamental resources to young people.
- Establish a point of contact to report local events, plans, commitments, and progress to America's Promise.
- Monitor progress in the community using standard measurement tools provided by America's Promise.

A School of Promise is a school-based school-community collaborative. Local stakeholders in partnership with school officials commit to fulfilling all five basic promises to young people either directly or indirectly through existing school facilities. Criteria for being designated a School of Promise include:

- Fulfilling any of the five basic resource functions that are lacking in the lives of any of its young people.
- Setting specific, measurable goals for fulfilling the five functions within the school. Designating a full-time responsible Promise Coordinator to be located at the school site to oversee the delivery of resources to young people in a coordinated, personal, and accountable manner.
- Organizing a "site team" (to work closely with the Promise Coordinator) that includes representation from parents, the school, young people, social service agencies, local businesses, and other local community organizations for the purpose of providing a focal point for planning, coordination, and accountability.
- Seeking resources to support the activities through local commitments to include corporate, university, and/or foundation partners.
- Tracking the generation and delivery of local commitments and providing summary information to representatives of America's Promise. (www.americaspromise.org/What2a)

Is this kind of a multi-level approach enhancing the health and well-being of America's youth? A follow-up report, *Why the Five Fundamental Resources Matter: A Reassessment of the Evidence* (Benson and Walker 1998) states:

> New research shows that developmental strengths and resources such as those captured in the five fundamental resources have an additive power. That is, the more the better. Access to three of the resources, for example, is better than having access to one. And access to all five is particularly powerful. This line of reasoning is supported by a new study of 99,000 public school 6th-12th grade students across the United States. As the number of developmental assets (or resources) increases in a young person's life, two important trends are seen. First, multiple forms of health-compromising behavior decrease dramatically, including alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use, violence, anti-social behavior, attempted suicide, and driving and drinking. And, as the number of assets or resources increases, multiple forms of thriving increase, including school success, affirmation of diversity, and optimism for the future. These

relationships between positive developmental experiences and youth outcomes hold across many demographic variables, including race/ethnicity, age, gender, geography, and community size. The point: the more developmental resources, the better.

A SCHOOL SYSTEM FOR THE NEW MILLENNIUM

Actualizing the proposition that a community must take responsibility for its schools is a challenge that Michael Timpane, former vice president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, thinks educators should accept: "School leadership must be at the head of this parade. No one else can speak with as much legitimacy and effect in every community in the land" (Decker and Boo 1998).

The American Association of School Administrators (AASA) has taken the lead in trying to stimulate a discussion that will result in reconceptualizing the role of schools in relation to their communities. In a year-long project, the Association's Council of 21 took a look ahead at the kind of school system the nation will need in the future. The resulting report (Withrow 1999) is designed to stimulate debate in communities about the characteristics of schools and school systems capable of preparing students for a global information age. Paul Houston, the association's executive director, explains that AASA does not see the study and its conclusions as the last word, but rather as "a bridge from what our schools and school systems are to what they need to become."

The Council of 21, composed of leaders in business, government, education, and other areas, identified 16 characteristics that schools and school systems should have in order to prepare students for a global information age. (The Council noted that the characteristics are not listed in order of priority because all are important.)

- *The definitions of "school," "teacher," and "learner" are reshaped by the digital world.*

  —The term "school" must take on an expanded meaning beyond the physical structure and become more encompassing, embracing communities of knowledge and learning that are interest-wide, community-wide, and world-wide. While there may always be a school building, a school is likely to resemble a nerve center that connects teachers, students, and the community to the wealth of knowledge that exists in the world.

  —"Teachers" must become orchestrators of learning, moderators and facilitators as well as purveyors of knowledge and subject matter, so that they can help students turn information into knowledge and knowledge into wisdom.

  —"Learner" needs to be thought of in terms of preparing students for life in the real world. Out of both necessity and curiosity, lifelong learning must become a reality in people's lives.
- *All students have equal opportunity for an outstanding education, with adequate funding, no matter where they live.*

  An equal opportunity philosophy must drive everything from funding to the expectations we have for our students. It must apply to individuals with disabilities, the disadvantaged, and the legions of children just recently arrived from other countries.
- *Educators are driven by high expectations and clear, challenging standards that are widely understood by students, families, and communities.*

  Standards and expectations must be high but realistic, and schools, teachers, students, families, and other community members must be part of the process of developing those standards and expectations.
- *A project-based "curriculum for life" engages students in addressing real-world problems, issues important to humanity, and questions that matter.*

  Students must be able to connect what they are learning with what is happening or may happen in the real world. They need to be prepared for responsible citizenship in a democracy. Teachers will be challenged to help students make connections and understand why what they are learning has value.
- *Teachers and administrators are effectively prepared for the global information age.*

  All teachers and administrators must be prepared to make the best possible use of technology, both for student learning and for school and school district efficiency. Ultimately, teachers and administrators must move beyond managing time and space to managing for results.

- *Students, schools, school systems, and communities are connected around the clock with each other and with the world through information-rich, interactive technology.*

  With a concern for equal opportunity, schools and school districts will use technology and electronic networks to get families and the community on the education team.

- *School systems conduct, consider, and apply significant research in designing programs that lead to constantly improving student achievement.*

  Schools and school systems must do more research focused on improving student achievement and must use that research as part of the decision-making process. Teachers must take a more active role in research, assisted by training that will help them interpret and apply significant research in the classroom.

- *Students learn to think, reason, and make sound decisions and demonstrate values inherent in a democracy.*

  Critical thinking, higher-level thinking, and decision-making skills are basic to a sound education, and those skills must penetrate every area of the curriculum. Schools as well as communities have a responsibility to help students become more civil; understand the importance of being honest, respectful, trustworthy, and caring; understand and become participants in a free and democratic society; understand the consequences of their own actions and how their actions affect others; and understand the need for a code of ethics. Students need to understand rights and exercise responsibilities basic to maintaining those rights.

- *School facilities provide a safe, secure, stimulating, joyous learning environment that contributes to a lifelong passion for learning and high student achievement.*

  The school should be in touch with the rest of community and the world. The buildings themselves should be up-to-date, clean, and appropriately lighted, with proper temperature and air-quality controls. They should be places where students want to be.

- *Leadership is collaborative, and governance is focused on broad issues that affect student learning.*

  Rather than making major decisions in isolation, administrators must ask the opinions of teachers, families, and others on the staff and in the community; one of the challenges they will face is the management of expectations. But teachers and principals must have enough flexibility and control to run their schools and classrooms effectively. What is needed ultimately is communities in which citizens and schools are willing and able to say, "We're in this together."

- *Students learn about other cultures, respect and honor diversity, and see the world as an extended neighborhood.*

  Educators and communities must help students understand and appreciate the beauty of other cultures and respect all people. Students must have a solid grounding in the principles of human rights. They must try to understand people who hold different values and learn to accept dissent and individual differences. Schools must embody the principles of a democratic society and model democratic principles and respect for diversity in the way they are run.

- *Schools promote creativity and teamwork at all levels, and teachers help students turn information into knowledge and knowledge into wisdom.*

  We need both individual initiative and the synergy that comes from collaboration. Teamwork involving students, staff, and community must become commonplace, with teams working together face-to-face and electronically. The teacher's role will change dramatically from dispensing information to working alongside students, helping them transform information into knowledge and, eventually, wisdom.

- *Assessment of student progress is performance-based, taking into account students' individual talents, abilities, and aspirations.*

  Flexibility is needed in standards and assessments.

- *A student-centered, collaboratively developed vision provides power and focus for education community-wide.*

  Educational leaders must develop a vision for education in their communities, and must bring educators, families and others together to help them do it. School systems and their leaders need to know, through surveys, advisory groups, and just plain listening, what constituents

know, what they don't know, and what they need to know to give schools their support. Administrators must be open to what staff and community can teach them and must become masters of collaboration, while ensuring the intellectual and moral integrity of the school and school system.

- *Continuous improvement is a driving force in every school and school system.*
  Planning must be a continuous process, and educators must apply the principles of quality management.
- *Schools are the crossroads and central convening point of the community.*
  Schools must be around-the-clock hubs for lifelong learning, the connecting point for education and achievement for all who live and work in the community. They will also become centers for health care, housing assistance, social services, and other community services and agencies. School systems must become ever more creative at getting people involved, so that everyone in the community is on the education team.

A TESTED METHOD FOR BUILDING COMMUNITY

One proven process for building communities and involving families in the education of their children is community education (Decker and Boo 1998). For more than six decades, community educators have worked to build exceptionally strong ties between public schools and their communities, usually by developing community schools, transforming traditional 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. schools into extended-day learning, recreation, and social centers for community residents of all ages and needs. In these multi-purpose community schools, local residents and professional educators work together to address community problems in partnership with other community agencies and institutions.

Community education offers local residents and community agencies and institutions the opportunity to become active partners in providing educational opportunities and addressing community concerns. It is based on the following principles:

- *Lifelong learning.* Education is viewed as a birth-to-death process and everyone in the community—individuals, businesses, public and private agencies—shares responsibility for educating all members of the community and providing learning opportunities for residents of all ages, backgrounds, and needs.
- *Self-determination.* Local people have a right and a responsibility to be involved in determining community needs and identifying community resources that can be used to address those needs.
- *Self-help.* People are best served when their capacity to help themselves is acknowledged and developed. When people assume responsibility for their own well-being, they build independence and become part of the solution.
- *Leadership development.* The training of local leaders in such skills as problem solving, decision making, and group process is an essential component of successful self-help and improvement efforts.
- *Institutional responsiveness.* Public institutions exist to serve the public and are obligated to develop programs and services that address continuously changing public needs and interests.
- *Integrated delivery of services.* Organizations and agencies that operate for the public good can better meet their own goals and serve the public by collaborating with organizations and agencies with similar goals.
- *Decentralization.* Services, programs, and other community involvement opportunities that are close to people's homes have the greatest potential for high levels of public participation. Whenever possible, these activities should be available in locations with easy public access.

Using the community education process to design and implement a comprehensive plan for educational and community improvement takes time and the ongoing effort of committed people. But experiences in countless communities across the nation show benefits that are clearly worth the effort (Edwards and Biocchi 1996). Three examples of systems based on the principles of community education are community schools, full-service schools, and 21st Century Community Learning Centers.

COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

Community schools extend the concept of public education beyond the traditional K-12 program. They are not limited by traditional school schedules and roles, focusing instead on current community needs. Community schools are open schools, available for use before and after school for academic, extracurricular, recreation, health, social service, and workforce-preparation programs for people of all ages. They involve a broad range of community members, businesses, public and private organizations, and local, state, and federal agencies. They become places where people gather to learn, to enjoy themselves, and to become involved in community problem solving.

Designing schools as community schools is a win-win proposition for both educators and community members. From a problem-solving viewpoint, a school can be a support center for a whole network of agencies and institutions committed to addressing community needs and expanding learning opportunities for all community members. Community schools are practical and cost-effective because:

- School buildings are located in most neighborhoods and are usually easy to reach.
- Schools belong to the public and represent a large public investment.
- Schools have good resources and professional staffs.
- Traditional school hours leave plenty of time for other uses.

Community school programs work because:

- They provide places and programs in which community members can educate themselves.
- They involve families and other community members in efforts to improve academic achievement and school climate.
- They develop public knowledge about the diverse interests and interrelationships characteristic of a community.
- They provide a setting for community members to meet, talk through issues, and work together to address problems.
- They provide opportunities to discover and nurture the public leadership needed to sustain a healthy, vibrant community.

From an educator's viewpoint, community schools are a way to meet the challenges faced by public education. The sweeping changes that have occurred in families, schools, and communities require educators to collaborate with families and communities if they are to be successful in their primary mission of educating children.

FULL-SERVICE SCHOOLS

A full-service school deals not only with the educational needs of the children who attend, but also provides a full range of additional services for both the children and their families. In full-service schools:

> The school-linked services effort is part of a larger movement for more integration of education, health, and social services for children. Integration does not typically mean the merger of these service systems, but rather increased collaboration among them—that is, a partnership in which a number of service agencies develop and work toward a common set of goals. (Behrman 1992)

This approach is identified by three characteristics:

- Services are provided to children and their families through a collaboration among schools, health care providers, and social services agencies.
- The schools are among the central participants in planning and governing the collaborative effort.
- The services are provided at a school or are coordinated by personnel located at a school or at a site near the school.

This approach does not mean that school personnel provide all of the services. Their role is to identify children and families who need services and to link them to the services that are available.

21ST CENTURY COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTERS

The U.S. Department of Education's 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative is a federal response to the growing challenges facing schools and communities. President Clinton (1996) explained the rationale for the initiative:

> Increasingly, our schools are critical to bringing our communities together. We want them to serve the public not just during school hours but after hours; to function as vital community centers; places for recreation and learning; positive places where children can be when they can't be at home and school is no longer going on; gathering places for young people and adults alike. Bringing our schools into the 21st century is a national challenge that deserves a national commitment.

The 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program was established by Congress in 1997. The authorizing legislation states:

> [Schools] should collaborate with other public and nonprofit agencies and organizations, local businesses, educational entities (such as vocational and adult education programs, school-to-work program, community colleges, and universities), recreation, cultural, and other community and human service entities, for the purpose of meeting the needs of, and expanding the opportunities available to, the residents of the communities served by such schools.

The Department's After-School initiative falls under this program. It encourages schools to stay open longer, providing a safe place for homework centers, mentoring, drug and violence prevention counseling, college preparation courses, enrichment in core academic subjects and the arts, and recreational activities.

The grants awarded under this program may be used to plan, implement, or expand community learning centers. The program defines a "community learning center" as:

> an entity within a public elementary, middle or secondary school building that (1) provides educational, recreational, health, and social service programs for residents of all ages within a local community, and (2) is operated by a local educational agency in conjunction with local governmental agencies, businesses, vocational education programs, institutions of higher education, community colleges, and cultural, recreational, and other community and human service entities.

In 1998, the Department's Office of Educational Research and Improvement administered the first national competition for the grants in a competition that proved to be one of the most competitive in the history of the Department. More than 5,000 people attended a series of regional "bidders conferences" cosponsored by the Department of Education and the C. S. Mott Foundation. Nearly 2,000 grant applications were received.

The first 99 grants totaled $40 million. For fiscal year 2000, funding was increased to $454 million. A funding level of one billion dollars is proposed for fiscal year 2001.

A publication of the Partnership for Family Involvement in Education (1998), a joint effort of Departments of Education and Justice, *Safe and Smart—Making After-School Hours Work for Kids* describes recent research on the effects of high-quality after-school programs and identifies the characteristics of high-quality programs:

- Clear goal setting and strong management.
- Quality after-school staffing.
- Attention to safety, health, and nutrition issues.
- Strong involvement of families.
- Effective partnerships with community-based organizations, juvenile justice agencies, law enforcement, and youth groups.
- Coordination of learning with the regular school program.
- Linkages between school-day teachers and after-school personnel.
- Evaluation of program progress and effectiveness.

A SOLEMN CONCLUSION—AND A WARNING

In March 1997, the nation's governors met at the National Education Summit and reaffirmed their commitment to school reform. They invited voters to hold them accountable and called for "an external independent, nongovernmental effort to measure and report each state's annual progress" (Education Week on the Web 1998). *Education Week*, with the support of the Pew Charitable Trusts, undertook the task, publishing the *State of the States* report, which contains a solemn conclusion and a warning:

> Public education systems in the 50 states are riddled with excellence but rife with mediocrity. Despite 15 years of earnest efforts to improve public schools and raise student achievement, states haven't made much

progress. As the millennium approaches, there is growing concern that if public education doesn't soon improve, one of two outcomes is almost inevitable:

- Our democratic system and our economic strength, both of which depend on an educated citizenry, will steadily erode; or,
- Alternative forms of education will emerge to replace public schools as we have known them.

This will not happen next year or perhaps even in the next 10 years. But in time, if our education systems remain mediocre, we will see one of those two results. Either would be a sad loss for America.

The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching reached much the same conclusion. Its former Vice President Michael Timpane offered the following advice:

Our schools need new ways to think about and foster parental and community involvement in education.... We must develop a new perspective, and it must rest on three challenging propositions:

- Schools cannot succeed nowadays (or, to put it more strongly, schools will fail) without the collaboration of parents and communities.
- Families need unprecedentedly strong support to become and remain functional.
- Communities must take charge of all the developmental needs of their children. (Decker and Boo 1998)

REFERENCES

Behrman, R. E., ed. 1992. *The Future of Children-School Linked Services.* Los Altos, CA: David and Lucille Packard Foundation, Center for the Future of Children.

Benson, P. L., and Walker, G. 1999. *Why the Five Fundamental Resources Matter: A Reassessment of the Evidence.* Alexandria, VA: America's Promise.

Decker, L. E., and Boo, M. R. 1998. *Community Schools: Serving Children, Families and Communities.* Fairfax, VA: National Community Education Association.

Dryfoos, J. G. 1994. *Full-Service Schools.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Education Week on the Web. 1998. *Quality Counts 97: The State of the States.*

Edwards, P., and Biocchi, K. 1996. *Community Schools Across America.* Flint, MI: National Center for Community Education.

Kingsley, G. T., McNeely, J. B., and Gibson, J. O. 1997. *Community Building Coming of Age.* Washington, DC: Development Training Institute, Inc. and Urban Institute.

Kretzmann, J. P., and McKnight, J. L. 1993. *Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets.* Evanston, IL: Center for Urban Affairs and Policy Research, Northwestern University.

Mathews, D. 1996. *Is There a Public for Public Schools?* Dayton, OH: Kettering Foundation Press.

Partnership for Family Involvement in Education, U.S. Departments of Education and Justice. 1998. *Safe and Smart — Making After-School Hours Work for Kids.* Government Printing Office.

Search Institute. 1998. *Developmental Assets: An Investment in Youth.* Minneapolis, MN.

Withrow, F., with Long, H., and Marx, G. 1999. *Preparing Schools and School Systems for the 21st Century.* Arlington, VA: American Association of School Administrators.

WEBSITES

America's Promise
www.americaspromise.org
Civic Practices Network
www.cpn.org
Education Week on the Web
www.edweek.org
Charles F. Kettering Foundation
www.kettering.org
Charles Stewart Mott Foundation
www.mott.org
National Center for Community Education
www.nccenet.org
Search Institute
www.search-institute.org
U. S. Department of Education
www.ed.gov/21stCentury
Community Learning Centers
www.ed.gov/offices/OERI/21stCCLC

28

CHAPTER IV
HOME AND SCHOOL AS PARTNERS

Parent and family involvement has become a major component of almost every plan to restructure schools. Parental roles have taken on heightened importance in the school effectiveness movement, the implementation of site-based management, and the issue of school choice. Further, the growing body of research demonstrates that parent involvement has a significant impact on student achievement. Additional impetus was provided at the national level by America 2000: An Education Strategy, an agenda for education reform adopted by President Bush and the nation's governors in 1990. The America 2000 strategy was expanded under the Clinton administration and given a new name, Goals 2000. Two goals were added to the 1990 agenda:

- All teachers will have the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to prepare U. S. students for the next century.
- Every school will promote parental involvement and participation in promoting the social, emotional, and academic growth of children.

BENEFITS OF FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

Study after study indicates that family involvement increases student achievement. Citing more than 85 studies, Henderson and Berla (1981, 1987, 1994) document the benefits for students, families, and schools when parents and family members are involved in children's education. This involvement has positive effects not only on student success, but on school quality and program design.

Effects on Student Success

- When parents are involved, students achieve more, regardless of socioeconomic status, ethnic/racial background, or parents' education level.
- The more extensive the family involvement, the higher the student achievement.
- Students whose families are involved have higher grades and test scores, have better attendance records, and complete their homework more consistently.
- When parents and families are involved, students display more positive attitudes and behavior.
- Students whose families are involved have higher graduation rates and higher enrollment rates in postsecondary education.
- Different involvement levels produce different gains. To produce long-lasting gains for students, the parent and family involvement activities must be well-planned, inclusive, and comprehensive.
- Educators have higher expectations of students whose parents and families collaborate with teachers. They also have higher opinions of those parents and families.
- In programs designed to involve parents and families in full partnerships, the achievement of disadvantaged children improves, sometimes dramatically, with the children farthest behind making the greatest gains.
- Children from diverse cultural backgrounds tend to do better when families and professionals collaborate to bridge the gap between the home culture and the school culture.
- Antisocial student behaviors such as alcohol use and violence decrease as family involvement increases.
- The benefits of involving parents and families are significant at all ages and grade levels.
- Middle and high school students whose parents and families remain involved make better transitions, maintain the quality of their work, develop realistic plans for the future, and are less likely to drop out.
- The most accurate predictor of a student's success in school is not income or social status, but the extent to which the student's family is able to: (1) create a home environment that encourages learning; (2) communicate high, yet reasonable, expectations for achievement and future careers; and (3) become involved in their children's education at school and in the community.

Effects on School Quality

- Schools that work well with families have better teacher morale and higher ratings of teachers by parents.
- Schools in which families are involved have more support from families and better reputations in the community.
- School programs that involve parents and families outperform identical programs without such involvement.

- Schools in which children are failing improve dramatically when parents and families are enabled to become partners with teachers.
- Schools' efforts to inform and involve parents and families are stronger determinants of whether inner-city parents will be involved in their children's education than are the level of parent education, family size, marital status, or student grade level.

Effects on Program Design

- The more the relationship between parents and educators approaches a comprehensive, well-planned partnership, the higher the student achievement.
- For low-income families, programs offering home visits are more successful in involving parents and families than programs requiring parents to visit the school.
- When families receive frequent and effective communication from the school or program, their involvement increases, their overall evaluation of educators is higher, and their attitudes toward the program are more positive.
- Parents and families are much more likely to become involved when educators encourage and assist them in helping their children with schoolwork.
- When parents and families are treated as partners and given relevant information by people with whom they are comfortable, they put into practice the involvement strategies they already know are effective but have been hesitant to use.
- Collaboration with families is an essential component of a reform strategy, but it is not a substitute for high-quality education programs or comprehensive school improvement.

Moles and D'Angelo (1993) and Wherry (1999) report on other teacher, administrator, school, and community benefits of successful home-school involvement. When parent involvement is a goal, teachers receive inservice training on how to work with families from diverse backgrounds, get more support from principals for their work with families, have more respect for and better appreciation of parents' time and ability to reinforce learning, and maximize time and resources by sharing knowledge, skills and resources cooperatively. Administrators benefit from better communication between school and home, fewer family complaints about inconsistent and inappropriate course content and homework, and improved school climate as children see parents and teachers as partners. Schools and communities benefit from improved teacher morale, higher ratings of teachers by families, decreased teacher turnover, more school support from families, and improved school climate and reputation.

STANDARDS AND MODELS OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT

There are many models for involving parents in the education of their children. Two models often cited in the literature were developed by Joyce Epstein of Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore and Susan Swap of Wheelock College in Boston.

The National PTA (1998), in *National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs*, closely follows the Epstein model. There are six standards, each with quality indicators; the first five relate to parent and family involvement, the sixth to collaboration with the community at large.

Standard 1. Communicating. Communication between home and school is regular, two-way, and meaningful. When families and educators communicate effectively, positive relationships develop, problems are more easily solved, and students make greater progress.

Quality Indicators. Effective programs:

— Use a variety of communication tools on a regular basis, seeking to facilitate two-way interaction through each one.

— Establish opportunities for families and educators to share pertinent information such as student strengths and learning preferences.

— Provide clear information regarding course expectations and offerings, student placement, school activities, student services, and optional programs.

— Mail report cards and regular progress reports to parents. Provide support services and follow-up conferences as needed.

— Disseminate information on school reforms, policies, disciplinary procedures, assessment tools, and school goals, and include parents in related decision-making.

— Conduct conferences with parents or another family member at least twice a year, with follow-up as needed. The conferences accommodate the varied schedules of parents, language barriers, and the need for child care.

— Communicate with parents regarding positive student behavior and achievement as well as misbehavior or failure.
— Encourage immediate contact between home and teachers when concerns arise.
— Distribute student work for parental comment and review it on a regular basis. Translate communications to assist limited-English-proficient and non-English-speaking families.
— Provide opportunities for parents and family members to communicate with principals and other administrative staff.
— Promote informal activities at which families, staff, and community members may interact. Provide staff development regarding effective communication techniques and the importance of regular two-way communication between school and family.

Standard II. Parenting. Parenting skills are promoted and supported. School staff recognize parent roles and responsibilities, ask families what supports they need, and work to find ways to meet those needs.

Quality Indicators. Effective programs:
— Communicate the importance of a positive relationship between parents and children.
— Link parents and families to supportive programs and resources within the community.
— Reach out to all families, not just those who attend parent meetings.
— Establish policies that support and respect family responsibilities, recognizing the variety of parenting traditions and practices within the community's cultural and religious diversity.
— Provide an accessible parent/family information and resource center to support parents and families with training, resources, and other services.
— Encourage staff members to demonstrate respect for families and their primary role in rearing children to become responsible adults.

Standard III. Student Learning. Parents and families play an integral role in assisting student learning. Enlisting families' involvement provides educators and administrators with a valuable support system, creating a team that is working for each child's success.

Quality Indicators. Effective programs:
— Seek and encourage parental participation in making decisions that affect students.
— Inform families of expectations for students in each subject at each grade level.
— Provide information about how to foster learning at home, give appropriate assistance, monitor homework, and give feedback to teachers.
— Regularly assign interactive homework that requires students to discuss with their parents or other family members what they are learning in class.
— Sponsor workshops or distribute information to assist families in understanding how students can improve skills, get help when needed, meet classroom expectations, and perform well on tests or other assessments.
— Involve families in setting annual student goals and planning for postsecondary education and careers. Encourage the development of a personalized education plan for each student, with families as full planning partners.
— Provide opportunities for staff members to learn and share successful approaches to engaging families in children's education.

Standard IV. Volunteering. Families are welcome in the school, and their support and assistance are sought. In order for parents and family members to feel appreciated and welcome, volunteer work must be meaningful and valuable. Capitalizing on the expertise and skills of parents and family members provides much-needed support to educators and administrators in their attempts to meet academic goals and student needs.

Quality Indicators. Effective programs:
— Ensure that greetings by office staff, signs near entrances, and other interactions with families create a climate in which parents and family members feel valued and welcome.
— Survey families regarding their interests, talents, and availability, and coordinate these resources with those that exist within the school.
— Ensure that family members who are unable to volunteer in the school building are given options for helping in other ways, at home or in their places of employment.
— Organize an easy, accessible program for using volunteers, providing ample training on procedures and school protocol.

— Develop a system for contacting all families for assistance as the year progresses.
— Design opportunities for those with limited time and resources to participate by addressing child care, transportation, work schedule, needs, etc.
— Show appreciation for families' participation and value their diverse contributions.
— Educate and assist staff members in creating an inviting climate and using volunteer resources effectively.
— Ensure that volunteer activities are meaningful and built on volunteer interests and abilities.

Standard V. School Decision Making and Advocacy. Families are full partners in the decisions that affect children and families—as individuals and as representatives of others. Families and educators depend on shared authority in decision-making systems to foster family trust, public confidence, and mutual support of each other's efforts in helping students succeed.

Quality Indicators. Effective programs:
— Provide an understandable, accessible, and well-publicized process for influencing decisions, raising issues or concerns, appealing decisions, and resolving problems.
— Encourage the formation of PTAs or other parent groups to identify and respond to issues of interest to families.
— Include family members on all decision-making and advisory committees, and ensure adequate training in such areas as policy, curriculum, budget, reform, safety, and personnel. Where site governance bodies exist, give equal representation to parents or other family members.
— Provide families with current information regarding school policies, practices, and both student and school performance data.
— Enable families to participate as partners when setting school goals, developing or evaluating programs and policies, and responding to performance data.
— Encourage and facilitate active family participation in decisions that affect students, such as student placement, course selection, and individual personalized education plans.
— Treat family concerns with respect and demonstrate genuine interest in developing solutions.
— Promote family participation on school district, state, and national committees.
— Provide training for staff and families on collaborative partnering and shared decision making.

Swap (1993) studied home-school involvement from a slightly different perspective, examining involvement in terms of the mutuality of interaction between home and school. She identified four models reflecting a continuum of increasing involvement: protective, school-to-home transmission, curriculum enrichment, and partnership. For each model, she discusses the goal, the assumptions on which the model is based, and the model's advantages and disadvantages.

Protective Model Goal is to reduce conflict between parents and educators, primarily through the separation of parents' and educators' functions, and to protect the school from interference by parents.	*Assumptions:* • Parents delegate to the school the responsibility for educating their children. • Parents hold school personnel accountable for results. • Educators accept this delegation of responsibility.
School-to- HomeTransmission Model Goal is to enlist parents in supporting objectives of the school.	*Assumptions:* • Children's achievement is fostered by continuity of expectations and values between home and school. • School personnel should identify the values and practices outside the school that contribute to student success. • Parents should endorse the importance of schooling, reinforce school expectations at home, provide conditions at home that nurture development and support school success, and ensure that the child meets minimum academic and social requirements.

Advantage: • Generally effective at achieving its goal of protecting the school against parental intrusion.	*Disadvantages:* • Exacerbates many conflicts between home and school by failing to create structures or predictable opportunities for preventive problem solving. • Ignores the potential of home-school collaboration for improving school achievement. • Rejects rich resources for enrichment and school support that could be available to the school from families and other members of the community.
Advantages: • Programs based on this model have increased children's school success. • Parents seek clear direction from the school about the social and academic skills needed for children's success and about the parents' role in supporting the development of those skills. • Parents welcome clear transmission of information, particularly when they have not had access to the social mainstream and seek such access for their children.	*Disadvantages:* • Programs built on this model often contain components that reflect an unwillingness to consider parents as equal partners with important strengths. • Some conditions such as dangerous housing, poor health, or stringent employment demands may limit some parents' ability to devote time and energy to parent involvement activities. • Schools may find it difficult to draw clear boundaries between the roles of school and home in formal education. • There is a danger of demeaning the value and importance of the family's culture in an effort to transmit the values and goals of the school. • Differences in class or educational background can make teachers and parents uncomfortable; turf concerns may have to be addressed and negotiated.

Curriculum Enrichment Model Goal is to expand and extend school's curriculum by incorporating families' contributions.	*Assumptions:* • Continuity of learning between home and school is critically important to children's learning. • The values and cultural histories of many children are omitted from the standard school curriculum, leading to a discontinuity of culture between home and school, and often to reduced motivation, status, and achievement. • The omission of cultural values distorts the curriculum, leading to a less accurate and less comprehensive understanding of events and achievements, and to a perpetuation of damaging beliefs and attitudes about minorities. • Parents and educators should work together to enrich curriculum objectives and content. • Relationships between home and school are based on mutual respect, and both parents and teachers are seen as experts and resources in the process of discovery.
Partnership Model Goal is for parents and educators to work together to accomplish a common mission, generally, for all children in school to achieve success.	*Assumptions:* • Accomplishing the joint mission requires a re-visioning of the school environment and the discovery of new policies, practices, structures, roles, relationships, and attitudes in order to realize the vision. • Accomplishing the joint mission demands collaboration among parents, community representatives, and educators. Because the task is highly challenging and requires many resources, no single group acting alone can accomplish it.

volvement Models (cont'd)

Advantages: • Model offers an attractive approach for incorporating parent involvement into children's learning. • Drawing on the knowledge and expertise of parents increases the resources available to the school and provides rich opportunities for adults to learn from each other. • The contributions of minorities who have not traditionally participated in schools are especially welcomed.	*Disadvantages:* • Creating continuity between home and school demands a significant investment of parents' and educators' time and resources. • The number of different cultures represented in some classrooms may make curriculum adaption very complex. • Debate still rages about what the school's mission should be in educating children from diverse backgrounds: Should a "majority" culture be taught to all, or curriculum reflect the diversity of the children? • Differences in class or educational background can make teachers and parents uncomfortable; turf concerns must be addressed and negotiated.
Advantage: • A true partnership requires a transforming vision of school culture based on collegiality, experimentation, mutual support, and joint problem solving.	*Disadvantages:* • This model is difficult to implement. • It requires exchanging the traditional solitary role of the educator for a collaborative role, and the development of new patterns of scheduling and interaction to support this new role.

WHY ARE THERE SO FEW COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAMS?

Summarizing almost three decades of research, Henderson and Berla (1994) conclude: "The evidence is now beyond dispute. When schools work together with families to support learning, children tend to succeed not just in school, but throughout life. The form of parent involvement chosen is not as critical to the success of children as the fact that it be reasonably well-planned, comprehensive, and long-lasting."

Why, in the face of this evidence, have so few schools implemented comprehensive family involvement programs? Swap (1993) states the paradox: "Given the widespread recognition that parent involvement in schools is important, that it is unequivocally related to improvements in children's achievement, and that improvement in children's achievement is urgently needed, it is paradoxical that most schools do not have comprehensive parent involvement programs."

Representatives of more than 40 organizations and institutions involved in school reform, parent involvement, education, youth development, and research met in Del Mar, California, in 1997 to examine three closely related problems (Lewis and Henderson 1997):

1. Overall, gains in student achievement are meager and far too slow. The gap between our most and least advantaged students, which had been narrowing, is again beginning to widen.
2. Schools serving the lowest income areas, in general, have the fewest resources, the least qualified teachers, the lowest parent and community support and the worst student achievement. In many of these schools, the majority of students are scoring not just below average, but in the bottom quartile.
3. Despite persuasive research showing a close connection between parent involvement and improved student achievement, few school reform efforts are making serious attempts to include low-income families.

Part of the explanation for the lack of programs is simple. Many educators—teachers and administrators—receive little or no training in how to involve families. The Harvard Family Research Project (National PTA 1997) analyzed the certification requirements of all 50 states and found that only a minority specifically mention parent involvement. Most of the states that did list parent involvement training as a requirement "used vague terminology, such as working with parents, with no additional elaboration." Further, the majority of school systems offer no formal training in parent involvement.

The Del Mar conference participants candidly acknowledged that in many low-income schools, "the most formidable barrier to parent involvement is racism. Racism in personal attitudes and in public policy must be out on the table" (Lewis and Henderson 1997). The report noted that parents interviewed for a Title I study of parent involvement often defined what they wanted from school in one word: respect.

Another explanation for the lack of parent involvement programs is the changing definition of family. Moore (1993) observes:

> The United States is expanding its definition of "family." Gone are the days when "family" consisted of Mom, Dad, Dick, Jane, Puff, and Spot. "Family" now includes single mothers and children, single fathers and children, grandparents raising children, single unrelated adults living together and, increasingly, single adults living alone who claim other "family" members living elsewhere.

Moore might also have included foster parents, foster grandparents, and older siblings among the kinds of child care arrangements. Educators need to change the way they think about children's support systems and devise ways to work with all families, however defined.

Finally, part of the explanation for the lack of programs resides with staff priorities. Researchers Funkhouser and Gonzales (1997) suggest what schools might do:

> Above all, schools, under the leadership of principals, possess the primary responsibility for initiating school-family partnerships. Schools can invest heavily in professional development that supports family involvement, create time for staff to work with parents, supply necessary resources, design innovative strategies to meet the needs of diverse families, and provide useful information to families on how they can contribute to their children's learning.

They conclude: "Once schools initiate the dialogue and bring parents in as full partners, families are

37

typically ready and willing to assume an equal responsibility for the success of their children."

CHARACTERISTICS OF SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIPS

There is no blueprint for a partnership school—a school that collaborates effectively with families. Because schools are so different, there is no single model, no single set of practices to which people can point and say, "*That* is the definitive partnership school." In recognition of this diversity, the U.S. Department of Education published *Family Involvement in Children's Education: An Idea Book* (Funkhouser and Gonzales 1997), which reports on selected local approaches.

Researchers found that schools that are successful in involving large numbers of parents and other family members use a team approach in which each partner assumes responsibility for the success of the partnership. They concluded that, although the most appropriate strategies for a particular community depend on local interests, needs, and resources, successful approaches share an emphasis on innovation and flexibility. The experiences of local schools and districts suggest the following guidelines.

- *There is no "one size fits all" approach to partnership.* Build on what works well locally. Begin the school-family partnership by identifying, with families, the strengths, interests, and needs of families, students, and school staff, and design strategies that respond to identified strengths, interests, and needs.
- *Training and staff development are essential.* Strengthen the school-family partnership with professional development and training for all school staff as well as for parents and other family members. Both school staff and families need the knowledge and skills that will enable them to work with one another and with the larger community to support children's learning.
- *Communication is the foundation of effective partnerships.* Use strategies that accommodate the various language and cultural needs, lifestyles, and work schedules of school staff and families; even the best planned school-family partnerships will fail if the participants cannot communicate effectively.
- *Flexibility and diversity are key.* Recognize that effective parent involvement may not require a parent's or other family member's presence at a workshop, meeting, or the school. The emphasis should be on families helping children learn, and this can happen in schools, homes, and elsewhere in the community.
- *Projects should take advantage of the training, assistance, and funding offered by sources external to schools.* These may include school districts, community organizations and public agencies, local colleges and universities, state education agencies, and regional assistance centers.
- *Change takes time.* Recognize that developing a successful school-family partnership requires continued effort over time, and that solving one problem may create new challenges. Further, a successful partnership requires the involvement of many stakeholders, not just a few.
- *Projects need regular assessment using multiple indicators.* The indicators may include the degree of family, staff, and community participation and the participants' satisfaction with school-related activities. Measures of the quality of school-family interactions and various indicators of student progress may also be used to assess the effects of the partnership.

Swap (1993) identified four elements that families and educators should consciously incorporate into a partnership:

- *Two-way communication.* Families and educators both have vital information to share. Educators share information with parents about children's progress in school; their expectations and hopes for the school and the children; and their curriculum, policies, and programs. Families share information with educators about each child's needs, strengths, and background and their expectations and hopes for the school and the child.
- *Enhanced learning at home and at school.* Families contribute to children's learning by having high expectations, providing a setting that allows concentrated work, supporting and nurturing learning that occurs in school and elsewhere, and offering love. Educators develop curriculum and instructional practices and strong relationships with children that create conditions for optimal learning. Families and educators develop an array of ways in which parents can be involved in and out of the classroom to enrich children's learning.

- *Mutual support.* Educators support families by offering them educational programs that are responsive to their interests and needs. Families support educators in many ways, such as volunteering in school, organizing and planning activities, raising money, and attending school functions. Educators and families build trusting relationships and arrange occasions to acknowledge and celebrate each other's contributions to children's growth. Increasingly, the school becomes the critical institution in the community for linking families with useful health, education, and social services.
- *Joint decision making.* Families and educators work together to improve the school through participation on councils, committees, and planning and management teams. Parents and educators are involved in joint problem solving at the level of the individual child, the classroom, the school, and the district.

The National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education (NCPIE) stresses that in order to create and *sustain* comprehensive programs, educators need to develop written policies that support them. NCPIE (2000) emphasizes that the policies should be developed in collaboration with teachers, administrators, families, students, businesses, community-based organizations, and other key stakeholders and address:

- Opportunities for all families to become involved in making decisions about how involvement programs will be designed, implemented, assessed, and strengthened.
- Involvement of families of all children at all ages and all grade levels.
- Recognition of diverse family structures (including non-biological caregivers) and differing circumstances and responsibilities that may impede participation.
- Outreach efforts that facilitate the participation of families who have low-level literacy skills or for whom English is not their primary language.
- Frequent provision of information to families about educational programs' objectives and their child's participation and progress in the programs.
- Professional development opportunities for teachers and staff to enhance their effectiveness in working with families.
- Linkages with service agencies and community groups that address key family issues.
- Opportunities for families to share in decision making regarding school policies and procedures that affect their children.

NCPIE also points out that the development of written policies is not enough. Implementation strategies must be designed to put the policies into practice. Implementation strategies should include:

- Assessing family's needs and interests about ways of working with the schools.
- Setting clear and measurable objectives based on parent and community input, to help foster a sense of cooperation and communication between families, communities, and schools.
- Hiring (or designating) and training a parent/family liaison to directly contact parents and coordinate family activities. The liaison should be sensitive to the needs of family and community, including the non-English speaking community.
- Developing multiple outreach mechanisms to inform families, businesses, and the community about involvement policies and programs.
- Recognizing the importance of a community's historic, ethnic, linguistic, and cultural resources in generating interest in involvement.
- Using creative forms of communication between educators and families that are personal, goal oriented, and make optimal use of new communication technologies.
- Mobilizing parents/families as volunteers in the school assisting with instructional tasks, meal service, and administrative office functions. Volunteers might also be classroom speakers and tutors.
- Providing staff development for teachers and administrators to enable them to work effectively with families and with each other as partners in the educational process.
- Ensuring access to information about nutrition, health care, services for individuals with disabilities, and support provided by schools or community agencies.
- Scheduling programs and activities flexibly to reach diverse family groups.
- Evaluating the effectiveness of the involvement programs and activities on a regular basis.

The National PTA (2000) recommends that schools use action teams that represent all concerned parties to help develop formal policies and action plans and monitor and evaluate the implementation process. These action teams are a way to harness the enthusiasm and energy necessary to

create and sustain a system for making real and lasting changes.

GETTING STARTED

Three familiar family-involvement programs—parent conferences, home visits, and family resource centers—can become vehicles for launching a comprehensive home-school partnership.

Parent-teacher conferences. A parent-teacher conference is one occasion when the expectations of the teacher and the family member should be the same: each speaking and listening to the other, each asking questions. These conferences should be a welcomed opportunity for both teachers and families, but frequently the opposite is true. Family members may have only their own experiences as a student—good or bad—as preparation for the conference. They may be apprehensive, burdened by a perception that "the teacher knows it all," "the teacher is in control," or "the teacher doesn't really know my child." Teachers may have their own apprehensions based on their own experience—or lack of it—in working with families.

Schools can do much to make the parent-teacher conference successful for both teachers and families. Inservice training sessions can be developed, and veteran teachers can give role-playing demonstrations of what to expect and how to react.

In scheduling conferences, schools must be sensitive to family demographics and diversity. Scheduling must be flexible, often including time before school, before or after a family member's job, and on weekends. It may also be appropriate to include the student in the conference.

Teachers should:

- Begin on a positive note and listen closely and sympathetically for things that will be helpful in dealing with the child.
- Sit at a small table or a student desk so that the teacher's desk doesn't become a barrier between the teacher and the family member.
- Be prepared. Bring records such as grade sheets, papers and other examples of student work, test results, notes, etc.
- Make notes on the main points they want to get across to family members. Be specific, using simple language and avoiding jargon.
- Ask family members for their opinions and advice and show respect for their contributions.
- Give family members ample opportunity to discuss their concerns. When appropriate, invite them to visit the classroom during the regular school day.
- Focus on solutions arrived at jointly, concentrating on one or two areas, if possible.

The school can also help families prepare for conferences. Newsletters, PTA meetings, and local newspaper features and television and radio programs can provide tips on how to prepare for a productive meeting, including questions to ask.

Translators should be provided if language barriers are expected. Some schools recruit volunteers to check on the progress and well-being of students whose parents are unable—or unwilling—to come to school.

Home visits. Home visits are a family involvement strategy with several purposes. They may be used to welcome new families to the school community; survey families for their views on school policies and programs; report on student progress; demonstrate home learning activities; help find solutions to specific problems; etc. They may be conducted by the principal, teachers, community aides, or trained volunteers.

Teacher home visits can be especially beneficial. Teachers have an opportunity to gain insights and parental support that may help them work with students. Parents have an opportunity to communicate from the security of their own homes, both receiving and giving information about their children. And students may enjoy welcoming teachers into their homes and seeing them in a new, more personal setting. Preparation for home visits should follow most of the same steps as preparation for a parent-teacher conference.

A major constraint has historically limited home visits. Most teachers have little training in establishing relationships with parents in any setting, although many have developed competence by working with parents in events held at the school. But home visits require a somewhat different approach, and lack of specific training may be a formidable barrier. In considering whether to make a home visit, a teacher should keep several principles in mind. The home visit should have a clearly communicated purpose. At all times the teacher must be sensitive to cultural differences and set a tone for mutual respect. Regardless of personal feelings or

opinions about the family or the household, the teacher must realize that there can be no viable relationship without mutual, demonstrated respect.

The reality is that a home visit may be refused by a parent or other family member. That person's rights must be respected. Another reality is that some neighborhoods are not safe to visit. In either case, consideration should be given to holding visits in the meeting rooms of housing projects, in religious meeting facilities, or in other community meeting rooms.

Family resource centers. In these centers, sometimes called parent education centers, schools can offer families a wealth of resources, including written and audio-visual materials in several languages that address a wide range of concerns. Topics may include such school issues as homework and such child development issues as discipline, communication, self-esteem, and handling stress. Information may also be provided on community resources that families can draw upon. Family resource centers may also offer parenting classes, which are usually age- or problem-specific, or provide speakers for community groups on specific topics.

Parent Information Resource Centers, an outcome of Goals 2000, are in every state. The Individual with Disabilities Education Act also provides for parent resource centers, called Parent Training Information Centers, in every state.

TITLE I AS A TOOL FOR PARENT INVOLVEMENT

The Center for Law and Education (CLE Issue/Project Areas 1999) recommends using Title I as a tool for building parents' capacity for school involvement. Under Title I, schools are required to provide assistance to parents to help them understand the National Education Goals and the standards and assessment that will be used to determine children's progress, and how they may help. Every school district except the smallest is required to spend at least 1 percent of its Title I funds on training and education programs for parents, and parents must be involved in decisions about how this money is spent.

The local education agency must have a parent involvement policy that is jointly developed with parents (www.cleweb.org/issues/title1). This policy must outline how the LEA will:

- Involve parents in the development of the local Title I plan.
- Build parents' capacity for involvement in decisions regarding their children's education.
- Coordinate strategies with parents in other programs such as Even Start and Head Start.
- Conduct annual evaluations of the effectiveness of the parent involvement effort.
- Use the results of the annual evaluations to design strategies for school improvement and revise policy as needed.

In addition, every school that receives Title I funds must have a parent involvement policy as part of its Title I plan. This policy must be developed jointly with, approved by, and distributed to parents and must include a description of how the school will:

- Convene an initial annual meeting for parents to explain Title I.
- Offer flexible meetings for parents. Such meetings should include time to share experiences, brainstorm about creative programs to involve parents, and participate in decisions about the education of their children.
- Involve parents in planning, review, and improvement of the program.
- Give parents timely information about the program, including a description of the school curriculum and the assessments used to measure student progress.
- Implement a school-parent compact.
- Build capacity to ensure the effective involvement of parents. Schools and school districts are to provide training and materials and must coordinate with other programs, such as literacy training programs, in order to help parents help their children at home. Schools must also help teachers, principals, and other staff work well with parents.

The required school-parent compact must be jointly developed with parents and outline how the school and parents will work together to help Title I students achieve the high content and performance standards set by the state for all students. The compact must:

- Describe the school's responsibility to provide high quality curriculum and instruction in a supportive and effective environment that will enable students to meet the state standards.

- Describe how parents will be responsible for supporting their child's learning. (Examples given are monitoring whether children have finished their homework and how much television children are allowed to watch.)
- Address the importance of communication between teachers and parents. The school is required to provide at least:
  — parent-teacher conferences in elementary schools, at least once a year, when parents and teacher will discuss the compact as it relates to an individual child's achievement.
  — frequent reports to parents on the children's progress.
  — reasonable access to staff and to classrooms to observe activities.

OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

One barrier to establishing a school-family partnership may be the community's perception of the school and its staff. From 1973 to 1993, the proportion of Americans who expressed confidence in educational institutions dropped from 27 to 22 percent, while the proportion of those expressing little confidence rose from 8 to 18 percent (National Opinion Research Center 1993). In a report reviewing almost 30 years of polling, Phi Delta Kappa International (1999) said the most obvious conclusion is that the closer people are to the public schools, the higher their regard for them: "The relationship between proximity and regard should make it clear that educators need to be diligent in their efforts to get more people into public schools."

An earlier study by Phi Delta Kappa (1988) examined the factors that most influenced gain or loss of community confidence in a local school. The top three factors ranked as sources of gain in confidence were, in order: teacher attitudes, administrator attitudes, and student attitudes. The top three factors resulting in loss in confidence were: teacher attitudes, the decision-making process, and administrator attitudes. Obviously, teacher and administrator attitudes towards family involvement affect the ways in which they reach out to students and families and determine whether there is a welcoming school environment.

One barrier to involvement is the feeling of powerlessness—the conviction that what one person does or doesn't do will make no difference. Sarason (1991) sums up the effect of this feeling on an individual's willingness to become involved: "When one has no stake in the way things are, when one's needs or opinions are provided no forum, when one sees oneself as the object of unilateral actions, it takes no particular wisdom to suggest that one would rather be elsewhere." If educators—teachers and administrators—truly want families' involvement in school and in the education of children, they will have to find ways to empower families, to share some of their power in making decisions about children's education. Encouragement and support must be offered to each group; each group must be made to feel wanted and needed.

Sarason also points out that students have a great deal of influence on the public's confidence in schools. Students are the most important constituency of any school, but they are often left out of decisions.

> We often act as though students are the products of school, when, in fact, kids must be the workers in order to learn. They must want to come to school, and they must be willing to work, even when no one is hanging over them. If we can't achieve this, no kind of school reform, however ambitious, will improve student learning and public education. So it's hard to explain why we don't routinely ask kids—especially kids in trouble—about how to improve schools.

Funkhouser and Gonzales (1997) offer practical suggestions and strategies for overcoming other common barriers to family involvement in schools.

Overcoming time and resource constraints. Families and school staff need time to get to know each other, learn from one another, and plan how to work together. Strategies for helping teachers include: (1) assigning parent coordinators or home-school liaisons to help teachers make and maintain contact with families through home visits, or by covering classes so teachers can meet with family members; (2) providing time during the school day for teachers to meet with parents or visit them at their homes; (3) providing stipends or compensatory time off for teachers who meet with families after school hours; and (4) freeing teachers from such routine duties as lunchroom supervision so that they can meet with family members. Schools

42

can also provide easier access to telephones and voice mail, provide information hotlines, and use technology in other ways to make communication easier and more efficient.

Schools can demonstrate sensitivity to families' time and safety concerns by scheduling meetings to accommodate families' working schedules, and holding them at places other than the school when advisable. Schools can also help by: (1) providing early notices about meetings and activities to allow families to adjust their schedules; (2) offering the same event more than once; (3) providing information to families who could not attend a meeting; and (4) establishing homework hotlines and voice mail systems so families can stay in touch from their homes. Schools can address families' resource constraints by providing transportation and child care services, holding school-sponsored events in non-school facilities convenient to families' homes, and making home visits.

Dispelling misconceptions. Training for teachers and other school staff can play a key role in dispelling some of the misconceptions and stereotypes that are barriers to effective partnerships. Schools can provide school staff with information and strategies on how to reach out to families and work effectively with them. Some schools have found that using parent coordinators or parent volunteers to train school staff not only builds parents' leadership skills but also gives staff the opportunity to learn about families from a family member's perspective.

Schools can use a variety of ways to inform and involve parents. Newsletters and school information hotlines can help families keep up to date with school issues and events. Posting fliers in places where families congregate, developing parent handbooks, making telephone calls—especially to share positive information—can channel information to families. Holding periodic parenting workshops can help families learn about child development. Schools can offer workshops, hands-on training, and home visits to help parents learn how to support children's learning at home. Other programs can help family members capitalize on their skills and expertise and learn how to assist school staff and students as volunteers. Family resource centers can provide a wide variety of information and support services.

Bridging differences. Language and cultural differences and differences in educational attainment can make communication between families and school staff difficult, and may adversely affect family participation in school activities. In addition, some immigrant families have different views of schools and their own role in their children's education. Schools must be sensitive to the needs of families who may not easily understand the written communications sent to them, or may see themselves as unprepared to help with homework or school work. Family members' bad memories of their own school experiences may also be deterrents to involvement. Solutions to overcoming this barrier include designing ways for non-readers or those with limited English proficiency to work with children to promote literacy. Schools can give family members an opportunity to experience what their children are learning in an environment that is pleasant and non-threatening, thus allaying doubts about the family members' ability to help their children. Schools can provide translation services (written and oral) and workshops and classes in families' first language. Home-school liaisons can also play an important role in reaching out to parents of different backgrounds, building trust between home and school. Schools can provide training to school staff specifically targeted to bridging cultural differences between home and school.

Tapping external supports. Schools rarely have funds, staff, or space for all the family involvement activities they want or need to offer. But they can forge partnerships with local businesses, agencies, colleges, and universities to provide such supports as educational programming and homework hotlines, health and social services, conferences and workshops, adult education, school refurbishing, transportation and non-school meeting space. District and state supports for family involvement initiatives may include funding, training, and resource centers.

Funkhouser and Gonzales stress that schools that succeed in involving large numbers of parents and other family members are investing in finding solutions, not making excuses.

43

INVOLVING "HARD-TO-REACH" PARENTS

As White-Clark and Decker (1996) point out, the terms "at-risk" and "hard-to-reach" have become clichés—verbal dumping grounds for a variety of conditions, some of them educational, others personal or societal. The student population labeled "at-risk" is usually poor and often from a minority culture, and "hard-to-reach" parents are often assumed to be minorities, with low socioeconomic status, inner-city residence, and little formal education. Another label for such parents is "disadvantaged."

The 1995 *Kids Count Overview*, "Fathers and Families," reported on the negative effect of the absence of fathers in many children's lives, particularly children from minority and low-income families.

In October 1999, the U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services held a live, interactive teleconference for educators and family service providers on strategies for engaging fathers in children's learning. The rationale for the teleconference was research showing that when fathers are involved, children learn more, perform better in school, and exhibit healthier behavior. It was emphasized that even when fathers do not share a home with their children, their active involvement can have a lasting and positive impact. "Fathers Matter!", a two-hour, national satellite event, offered strategies and tools for teachers, school principals, child care providers and others to use to help involve fathers in children's learning, including readiness. Hosted by the Secretary of Education and the Secretary of Health and Human Services, the teleconference suggested ways to make schools more welcoming to parents, develop family-friendly policies in workplaces, encourage support for fathers' roles in education, and provide professional development for those who work with children and families (Partnership for Family Involvement in Education 1999).

The truth is that any parent can be hard-to-reach. Professional parents who work long hours or parents who lack child care may be just as "hard-to-reach" as parents who fit the common stereotypes of poor and minority.

White-Clark and Decker acknowledge that there are often barriers to overcome in involving parents and families in children's education, and that no one approach will work with all families at all times. They agree that schools should be parent-friendly and that every effort should be made to bridge language gaps, but they contend that fewer parents would be labeled "hard-to-reach" if educators took a more optimistic approach to them. They suggest that educators should:

- Believe parent involvement is important and that educational programs are incomplete without it.
- Embody an ethic of caring—making a sincere effort to understand the life situations of parents who are not involved in the school and, when possible, helping them overcome barriers to involvement.
- Disregard "hard-to-reach" stereotypes, facing up to their own misperceptions.
- Develop high expectations for all parents, seeking realistic rather than maximum involvement.
- Conceptualize the roles of parents in their individual situations when designing involvement opportunities.
- Be willing to address personal concerns including any of their own experiences that may impede implementation of parent involvement activities.
- Study the framework of parent involvement programs in order to develop a clear understanding of their purpose and function.
- Be willing to work to improve parent involvement, including getting out of the school building and into the community when it is beneficial to do so.

PREPARING EDUCATORS FOR FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

The Harvard Family Research Project has been looking into the relative lack of teacher certification requirements in the area of family involvement since 1992. As recently as 1997, researchers found the same lack and noted that training offered was often limited in both content and method.

A project publication, *New Skills for New Schools* (Shartrand and others 1997), focuses on teacher training, but the research findings are of interest to all educators who seek to involve families in the education of their children. In addition to identifying the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary to prepare for family involvement, the research confirmed three needs:

(1) more direct experience with families and communities;
(2) support in making school conditions conducive to family involvement; and
(3) opportunities to share successful experiences and outcomes with colleagues.

The publication focuses on developing mutual partnerships involving all families while recognizing a range of types of family involvement. It places training needs in a framework of content areas:

(1) general family involvement;
(2) general family knowledge;
(3) home-school communication;
(4) family involvement in learning activities;
(5) families supporting schools;
(6) schools supporting families; and
(7) families as change agents.

Each of the content areas is divided into four approaches: a functional approach, based on the work of Joyce Epstein; parent empowerment based on the work of Moncrieff Cochran; cultural competence based on the work of Luis Moll; and social capital based on the work of James Coleman.

45

General Family Involvement Functional Approach	Parent Empowerment
• Attitude that all teachers should learn skills and sensitivity in dealing with parents. • Knowledge about the goals and benefits of family involvement and the barriers to it. • Skills in involving parents of all backgrounds in school. • Knowledge of the role of school administration in promoting or preventing family involvement.	• Attitude that all parents want what is best for their children and that all parents want to be good parents. • Attitude that parents are children's first and most important teachers. • Attitude of respect for the family's role in children's nurturance and education. • Attitude that the most useful knowledge about rearing children can be found within the community.
General Family Knowledge **Functional Approach**	**Parent Empowerment**
• Knowledge of different cultural beliefs, lifestyles, childrearing practices, family structures, and living environments. • Attitude of respect for different backgrounds and lifestyles. • Knowledge of the functions of families.	• Attitude of support toward parents, focused on strengths rather than deficits. • Knowledge of power differences among groups in society. • Knowledge of the history of disenfranchised groups. • Knowledge of the effects of a family's disadvantaged status on its interactions with teachers or other professionals. • Knowledge of how families interact with schools and similar institutions.
Home-to-School Communication **Functional Approach**	**Parent Empowerment**
• Skills in effective interpersonal communication. • Communication skills to deal with defensive behaviors, distrust, hostility, and frustration. • Skills in using active listening and effective communication to understand families and to build trust and cooperation.	• Skills in effective interpersonal communication. • Skills in treating parents as equal partners. • Knowledge of the importance of positive communication with parents, even when the child is having problems. • Attitude that parents should not be controlled, but rather that their views and needs should be understood.

e of Family Involvement

Cultural Competence	Social Capital
• Knowledge that minority and low socioeconomic status students benefit academically from family involvement. • Skills in using culturally appropriate themes in the curriculum.	• Knowledge of the idea of social capital and parental investment in their children's learning.
Cultural Competence	**Social Capital**
• Knowledge about cultural influences on discipline, learning, and childrearing practices. • Knowledge of personal assumptions, belief systems, and prejudices that can affect relationships with family and community. • Skills in understanding and reversing negative stereotypes of parents, families, and community members.	• Knowledge that schools and homes have different norms and values, and that such differences influence partnerships between home and school. • Knowledge of common values that span different cultures and institutions. • Skills in conflict negotiation and consensus building.
Cultural Competence	**Social Capital**
• Knowledge of the importance and logistics of obtaining translators for families who do not read or speak English. • Knowledge of the styles of communication of different cultural groups.	• Skills in communicating expectations and values in order to build a sense of trust among members in the community. • Skills in communicating with parents in a way that models how values will be transmitted between other members of society (parent-child, teacher-child, or parent-parent). • Skills in being attentive, persistent, and dependable over time in relationships with families, thereby showing genuine caring toward families.

Family Involvement in Learning Functional Approach	Parent Empowerment
• Skills in involving parents in their children's learning outside of the classroom. • Skills in sharing teaching skills with parents.	• Skills in developing activities that build parents' confidence and facility in conducting home learning activities. • Skills in providing constructive feedback.
Families Supporting Schools **Functional Approach**	**Parent Empowerment**
• Skills in involving parents in the school and in the classroom.	• Skills in making parents feel valued by inviting them to contribute their expertise in the classroom and in the school.
Schools Supporting Families **Functional Approach**	**Parent Empowerment**
• Knowledge of how schools can support families' social and educational needs. • Knowledge about processes of consultation and communication. • Knowledge of the roles of various specialists and of interprofessional collaboration. • Skills in referral procedures.	• Knowledge of and skills in promoting parent empowerment through adult education and parenting courses. • Knowledge of and skills in ameliorating families' basic needs as a first step to helping them help their children academically. • Skills in incorporating families self-identified needs in parent programs and school activities.
Families as Change Agents **Functional Approach**	**Parent Empowerment**
• Skills in supporting and involving families as decision makers; action researchers; advocates; and parent and teacher trainers. • Skills in sharing information to help families make decisions. • Skills in sharing leadership and transferring it to parents. • Skills in interacting with parents on an equal footing.	• Skills in promoting political empowerment for families through: – Advocating shared decision making in schools. – Informing families of governance roles in the school. – Recruiting family members to sit on boards and councils. – Preventing families' voices from being overridden in meetings.

of Family Involvement (cont'd)

Cultural Competence	Social Capital
• Skills to incorporate family "funds of knowledge" into homework projects, so that families and communities can contribute to children's learning.	• Skills in motivating family involvement in home-learning activities. • Skills in home visiting. • Skills in fostering community participation in educational activities.
Cultural Competence	**Social Capital**
• Knowledge of the financial and time constraints of parents. • Skills in creating opportunities for parent and other family member involvement in school. • Skills in discovering different potential contributions of families.	• Skills in fostering families' investment in school, by volunteering, attending events, and fundraising. • Skills in utilizing resources of other community groups. • Skills in building reciprocal exchanges between school and home.
Cultural Competence	**Social Capital**
• Knowledge of resources for cultural minorities. • Skills in creating opportunities for families with different backgrounds to learn from one another. • Sensitive attitude toward different groups' perceptions of school "help" and reciprocity. • Skills in incorporating family preferences into parent programs and school involvement activities.	• Skills in identifying the expectations and goals of families. • Knowledge of how school events can create social capital. • Skills in building reciprocal exchanges between school and home.
Cultural Competence	**Social Capital**
• Skills in encouraging parents or other family members to run for seats on school councils. • Knowledge of importance of providing translators at school council meetings. • Knowledge of importance of having teachers from various cultures be present on council to make all families feel welcome.	• Attitude that shared decision making is an essential ingredient to establishing and maintaining a common set of core values. • Skills in negotiating differences and conflicting opinions. • Skills in involving families in the design of curriculum that represents shared values. • Skill in co-development of mission statement that represents shared values.

TRAINING MATERIALS

In September 1994 the U.S. Department of Education established the Partnership for Family Involvement in Education as part of its continuing effort to increase family involvement. The Partnership held a video/teleconference on preparing teachers to work with families using the Harvard Family Research Center's *New Skills for New Schools* as a base. After the event, it produced *Partners for Learning: Preparing Teachers to Involve Families* (www.pfie.ed.gov 1999) which contains a guide on how to use it for inservice and preservice training.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) emphasizes the importance of family participation in educational decision making. The U.S. Office of Special Education Programs prepared training materials designed to provide parents and schools with a first tool to assure that IDEA is consistently and properly implemented throughout the country. Although its focus is on disability programs and policies, the training materials are broadly useful, particularly the section on parent and student participation in decision making. The National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities (NICHCY), a national information and referral center, has the *IDEA 97 Training Package* online—www.nichcy.org.

Two national centers focus specfically on involving fathers in children's lives and offer resources and training materials useful to educators and community organizations. The National Center for Fathering (NCF) was founded in 1990 in response to the dramatic trend toward fatherlessness in America. NCF conducts research on fathers and fathering and develops practical resources for fathers in a variety of fathering situations. The National Center for Strategic Nonprofit Planning and Community Leadership (NPCL) focuses on the special needs of fathers in "fragile families"—those with low-income, never-married parents. NPCL offers a full range of services, including needs assessment, evaluation, conference planning, professional development, financial management, and program development.

REFERENCES

Annie E. Casey Foundation. 1995. *Kids Count Data Book.* Washington, DC: Center for the Study of Social Policy.

Center for Law and Education. 1999. "Title I as a Tool for Parent Involvement," in *CLE Issue/Project Areas.* www.cleweb.org/title1/tool.

Epstein, J. 1992. "School and Family Partnerships," in *Encyclopedia of Educational Research.* NY: Macmillian.

Funkhouser, J. E., and Gonzales, M. R. 1997. *Family Involvement in Children's Education—Successful Local Approaches: An Idea Book.* Washington, DC: Government Printing Office.

Handbook for Developing Public Confidence in School. 1988. Bloomington, IN: Phi Delta Kappa Foundation.

Henderson, A. T., and Berla, N. 1994. *A New Generation of Evidence: The Family Is Critical to Student Achievement.* Washington, DC: National Committee for Citizens in Education.

Lewis, A. C., and Henderson, A. T. 1997. *Urgent Message: Families Crucial to School Reform.* Washington, DC: Center for Law and Education.

Moles, O. D., and D'Angelo, D., eds. 1993. *Building School-Family Partnerships for Learning: Workshops for Urban Educators.* Washington, DC: Office of Educational Research and Development, U.S. Office of Education.

Moore, L. 1993. "Re-defining, Re-inventing, and Re-establishing Community," in *Whole Child Whole Community.* S. Thompson, ed. Boston, MA: Institute for Responsive Education.

National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education. 2000. *Developing Family/School Partnerships: Guidelines for Schools and School Districts.* www.ncpie.org/ncpieguidelines.

National Opinion Research Center. 1993. "Public Opinion and Demographic Report: Confidence in Institutions," *American Enterprise 4* (November).

National PTA. 2000. *Building Successful Partnerships: A Guide for Developing Parent and Family Involvement Programs.* Bloomington, IN: National Educational Service.

National PTA. 1998. *National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs*. Chicago.

National PTA. 1997. *Teacher's Guide to Parent and Family Involvement*. Chicago.

National PTA. 1993. *School Is What We Make It! A Parent Involvement Planning Kit*. Chicago.

Parent Involvement in Education. 1992. Washington, DC: Office of Education Research and Improvement.

Partnership for Family Involvement in Education. 1999. *Partners for Learning: Preparing Teachers to Involve Families*. www.pfie.ed.gov.

Phi Delta Kappa International. 1999. *International Fast Facts About PDK/Gallup Poll 9/98*. www.pdkintl.org/whatis/ff4poll.htm.

Phi Delta Kappa Foundation. 1988. *Handbook for Developing Public Confidence in School*. Bloomington, IN.

Shartrand, A. M.; Weiss, H. B.; Kreider, H. M.; and Lopez, M. E. 1997. *New Skills for New Schools: Preparing Teachers in Family Involvement*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Family Research Project.

Sarason, S. B. 1991. *The Predictable Failure of Educational Reform*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Swap, S. M. 1993. *Developing Home-School Partnerships: From Concepts to Practice*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

U.S. Department of Education. 1994. *Strong Families, Strong Schools*. Government Printing Office.

U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs. 1999. *IDEA 97 Training Package*.www.nichcy.org/Trainpkg/traintxt/letter.

Wherry, J. H. 1999. *Selected Parent Involvement Research*. The Parent Institute. www.par-inst.com.

White-Clark, R., and Decker, L. E. 1996. *The "Hard-to-Reach" Parent: Old Challenges, New Insights*. Fairfax, VA: National Community Education Association.

Working with Families: Promising Programs to Help Parents Support Young Children's Learning. 1991. Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Budget and Evaluation, U.S. Department of Education.

WEBSITES

Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
www.ascd.org
Center for Law and Education
www.cleweb.org
Colorado Parent Information and Resource Center
www.cpirc.org
Harvard Family Research Project
http://gseweb.harvard.edu/~hfrp
National Center for Fathering
www.fathers.com
National Center for Strategic Nonprofit Planning and Community Leadership
www.ncpcl.org
National Center for Parent Involvement in Education
www.ncpie.org
National Education Association
www.nea.org
National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities
www.nichcy.org
National Parent Information Network
http://npin.org
National PTA
www.pta.org
Education Program Area-Parenting Resources
www.pta.org/programs/eduinc
National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs
www.pta.org/programs/
Teachers Guide to Parent and Family Involvement
www.pta.org/programs/
North Central Regional Educational Lab
www.ncrel.org
The Parent Institute
www.par-inst.com
Partnership for Family Involvement in Education
www.pfie.ed.gov
Phi Delta Kappa International
www.pdkintl.org
Middle Web Index
www.middleweb.com
U.S. Department of Education, Urgent Message: Families Crucial to School Reform
www.ed.gov/pubs/parents

CHAPTER V
SCHOOL-COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

School consumes a surprisingly small portion of children's lives in America. A young person who diligently attends school six hours a day, 180 days a year, from kindergarten through the 12th grade, will, upon his or her 18th birthday, have spent just 9 percent of his or her time since birth in school. This fact raises two critical questions: (1) what leverage does the other 91 percent of a child's time have on achieving the goal of academic success for all children? and (2) in what ways can educators ameliorate the negative effects and build on the positive ones from that 91 percent portion?

These are not new questions. In 1913, Joseph K. Hart pondered basically the same considerations in his examination of the educational resources of villages and rural communities.

> No child can escape his community. He may not like his parents, or the neighbors, or the ways of the world. He may drown under the processes of living, and wish he were dead. But he goes on living, and he goes on living in the community. The life of the community flows about him, foul or pure; he swims in it, drinks it, goes to sleep in it, and wakes to the new day to find it still about him. He belongs to it; it nourishes him, or starves him, or poisons him; it give him the substance of his life. And in the long run it takes its toll of him, and all he is.

A community also influences public education by the way its members rate the community's schools. The drop in public confidence in public education over the last several decades is well documented. In 1993, the National Opinion Research Center found that only 22 percent of Americans had confidence in public education institutions; the 1998 Phi Delta Kappan/Gallup Poll suggests why this is so, and something to do about it. "People assign low grades to the nation's schools. These are the ones they do not know, and the ones on which their information comes from the media." The same report makes a recommendation: "The demographic breakdowns for this poll make it clear that educators need to redouble their efforts to reach out to nonwhites by listening to them, addressing their problems, and providing opportunities for more involvement in school matters."

The need for schools to work with the whole community, not just the families of school children, is the topic of an increasing number of reports. Learning Together (Melaville 1998) summarizes the reasoning:

> Schools have a first-order responsibility for ensuring young people's academic success, but that doesn't diminish the responsibility of the rest of the community to help create the conditions in which young people can succeed more broadly not only in school, but also in their careers, in their civic responsibilities and eventually as parents. School-community initiatives provide a valuable setting in which to connect both school and community resources. The diversity of these initiatives is daunting.

National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs (National PTA 1998) lists "Collaborating with the Community" as one of the six standards and specifies quality indicators of successful programs.

Standard VI. Collaborating with the Community.
Community resources are used to strengthen schools, families, and student learning. As part of the larger community, schools and other programs fulfill important community goals. In like fashion, communities offer a wide array of resources valuable to schools and the families they serve. The best partnerships are mutually beneficial and structured to connect individuals, not just institutions or groups. This connection enables the power of community partnerships to be unleashed.

Quality Indicators. Effective programs:

- Distribute information regarding cultural, recreational, academic, health, social, and other resources that serve families within the community.
- Develop partnerships with local business and service groups to advance student learning and assist schools and families.
- Encourage employers to adopt policies and practices that promote and support adult participation in children's education.
- Foster student participation in community service.

— Involve community members in school volunteer programs.
— Disseminate information to the school community, including those without school-age children, regarding school programs and performance.
— Collaborate with community agencies to provide family support services and adult learning opportunities, enabling families to more fully participate in activities that support education.
— Inform staff members of the resources available in the community and strategies for utilizing those resources.

WORKING WITH THE COMMUNITY

Working with the community is a two-way process. Diverse stakeholders in public education—students, teachers, school administrators, parents, business people, community groups and organizations, and members of the community—must be involved as participants, not merely audiences, in discussions and actions on behalf of school improvement, increased student achievement, and strengthened families.

Over the past several decades, grassroots community involvement programs have moved from relative obscurity into the limelight of educational, health, and human service policy and practice. Key policy makers and many educational organizations would now argue that these kinds of grassroots connections are critical to school reform and, ultimately, to improved school outcomes.

In 1994, the U.S. Department of Education established the Partnership for Family Involvement in Education (PFIE). PFIE was intended as a way to build lasting alliances among businesses, community and religious organizations, families, and schools in the common cause of improving schools and promoting student achievement. The Department's role in the Partnership is to provide a network of support for those companies and organizations that are working to make education a community affair. The Partnership (pfie.ed.gov 1999) is designed to facilitate partners' networking in order to pool resources and ideas, share best practices, and be recognized for these efforts. It keeps partners informed of current educational issues and trends and provides resources and publications to make programs more effective.

Responding to controversy surrounding public schools' ability to engage in successful partnerships and collaborative initiatives, the Harvard Family Research Project (1995) conducted a series of studies centered on three questions:

- What kinds of programs are schools starting in order to work with parents of children from birth to age six to promote child development?
- What can pioneering programs teach about the challenges of developing and implementing these programs in conjunction with public schools?
- Can schools link and work with other community services in order to develop more comprehensive services to strengthen and support families?

The resulting publication, *Raising Our Future*, is a national resource guide for school-based programs designed to serve the families of young children. It profiles an array of service arrangements under school sponsorship and provides detailed information on such operational features as service, curriculum, staffing, and funding. The guide is intended not only to provide examples but to increase understanding of the key ingredients in building schools' capacity to sponsor family support programs.

Three national groups—the National Committee for Citizens in Education, the Academy for Educational Development, and the Center for Law and Education—with support from the Lilly Endowment, Inc., took the lead in another research project into grassroots programs involving schools, families and communities working together to help children succeed in school and have a brighter future. The project, *Supporting Our Kids*, had two charges: (1) to define a set of simple concepts to stretch people's thinking about how families could be involved in the whole range of public education, pre-kindergarten through high school; and (2) to produce a set of tools that local communities could use to get started. The project defined student achievement more broadly than good grades and high test scores to include the qualities students need to become healthy, happy, well-informed, hard-working citizens. It examined programs that extended partnerships across all grades and viewed the raising of children as a job shared by the entire community. *Learning from Others: Good Programs and Successful Campaigns* (Bamber and others 1996) profiles some 70 projects and describes how they focused on helping children learn and grow.

In March 1998, the Annenberg Institute released *Reasons for Hope,Voices for Change,*(www.aisr.brown.edu/html/pe/report 1999), based on an 18-month effort to identify, map, and describe a variety of projects for public engagement in public education projects across the U.S. It summarizes the work of hundreds of schools and communities and offers a look at how local civic, business, and school initiatives are developing the skills necessary to involve communities in educational improvement.

COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP

Working with the community is like any other process—someone must begin it. School leadership is often in the best position to begin the collaborative process. Timpane (Decker and Boo 1998) points out, "No one else can speak with as much legitimacy and effect in every community in the land. Few others can, frankly, stand the heat; attitudes and behaviors of long standing will not change overnight; a new sense of trust and common purpose will not bloom immediately."

According to Blank and Kershaw (1999), each school and community must develop, test, and refine strategies for gathering perceptions and collaborating on results while maintaining a school environment that is supportive of learning. They must learn to communicate effectively, promote supportive relationships, develop shared expectations, involve others productively, and support teaching and learning. These collaborative endeavors must prize diversity and inclusiveness and develop numerous connections and a range of opportunities to address the needs of the hard-to-reach, disadvantaged, and single working parents as well as those who are typically active supporters. Blank and Kershaw emphasize that it takes strong building-level leadership to initiate partnership activities, maintain control, and sustain momentum.

A principal's willingness and ability to engage in collaboration are essential to the success of the initiative. Historically, collaborative skills have not ranked high on the list of leadership abilities needed to be an effective principal, and few principals or other school personnel receive training in working with parents and families or the community at large.

Giles (1999) sees the successful principal of the future as an educational entrepreneur. Being an entrepreneur involves creating an environment in which teachers, families, and others involved in a partnership feel safe enough to take risks, and even to fail, in an effort to create positive change. This new principal must be willing to share the responsibilities of leadership but must at the same time be able to work effectively in two very different cultures: the hierarchy of the broader educational bureaucracy of which the school is a part, and the evolving collaborative structure of the school. As an educational entrepreneur, the principal needs to know not only how to negotiate the bureaucracy to attract and keep resources, but also how to prevent institutional regulation from interfering with the process of establishing and maintaining community partnerships.

Leading a collaborative, in which no one has control over all of the people and organizations involved, is different from leading in a traditional organizational setting. Participants in a National Dialogue on Leadership for Collaboration (Institute for Educational Leadership 1993) identified the following qualities and skills of collaborative leaders:

- *Listening and communicating.* Collaborative leaders consciously reach out to talk with and learn from the consumers of their services and the front-line workers who deliver those services. They value and nurture dialogue with leaders in order to gain a greater understanding of needs, concerns, and possibilities, and to build bridges within and across organizations and sectors in the community.
- *Building visions.* Collaborative leaders have skills to develop visions—clear pictures of how people, organizations, and community must come together to build a better future for children and families. They work to communicate that vision throughout their communities, adapting the vision to achieve an ever-increasing commitment to making it a reality.
- *Risk-taking.* Collaborative leaders do more than take risks themselves; they create a climate in which other people are willing to take risks, knowing that mistakes are to be viewed as learning experiences and will not lead to punitive action.
- *Respect for diversity.* Collaborative leaders convey not only tolerance, but acceptance, inclusion, and celebration. They strive to strengthen communications among different people and

groups, and bring to the collaborative dialogue people who reflect the diversity of their communities.

- *Knowledge and skills in group process.* Collaboration involves numerous meetings at which people must sort through problems, seek alternative solutions, and make decisions. Collaborative leaders have the group process skills needed to run effective meetings. They ensure the active involvement of all participants, giving them a sense of ownership in the process, and obtaining their commitment to follow through on the group's decisions.
- *Conflict management.* Rather than overlooking tough issues about which conflict might arise, collaborative leaders have the skills to manage conflict. They recognize that by working through conflicts, groups strengthen their capacity to solve complex problems.
- *Decisiveness.* Collaborative leaders are able to move groups toward decisions in ways that maintain both individual identity and group cohesion.
- *Consensus building.* Collaborative leaders use the group's vision to drive toward consensus on real changes that push people and agencies beyond traditional boundaries.
- *Motivation/passion.* Collaborative leaders motivate others by communicating the group's vision and by constantly nurturing other leaders and the many people with whom they work. Their passion provides fuel for others and helps groups overcome obstacles to positive outcomes.
- *Empowering.* Collaborative leaders give the work of the collaborative to the partners who are at the table. They recognize that nurturing leadership in others is as essential to the prudent exercise of leadership as leading itself.
- *Reflection.* Collaborative groups can be described as "learning communities," in which people challenge old ideas and assumptions and learn new ways of acting. Collaborative leaders facilitate the group's reflection so that learning can be captured and new behaviors internalized.
- *Flexibility.* Collaborative processes do not follow a linear path. Collaborative leaders must remain flexible, adapting yesterday's ideas and today's plan to tomorrow's realities.
- *Knowledgeable about other systems.* To make interagency collaboration work, leaders should have knowledge of systems other than their own. This knowledge enables them to ask better questions, moving people to think beyond the established framework of their agencies.

While it is true that the principal is usually the first-line "gatekeeper," the individual who will determine whether a school reaches out to involve families and the community in the education of children, it is also true that the whole staff—administrators, supervisors, teachers, and support personnel—are important to the creation of a welcoming environment and successful outreach. A team approach is necessary in developing meaningful educational partnerships that support academic achievement.

Katzenbach and Smith (1993) recommend six rules for effective team leadership that are applicable to the emerging roles of both principals and teachers as they work with families and other community members, agencies, and organizations:

1. Keep the purpose, goals, and approach relevant and meaningful. All teams must shape their own common purpose, performance goals, and approach.
2. Build commitment and confidence, keeping in mind that there is an important difference between individual accountability and mutual accountability. Both are needed if any group is to become a real team.
3. Strengthen the mix and level of skills. The most flexible and top-performing teams consist of people with all the technical, functional, problem-solving, decision-making, interpersonal, and teamwork skills the team needs to perform. Team leaders should encourage people to take the risks needed for growth and development.
4. Manage relationships with outsiders, removing obstacles as necessary. Team leaders are expected by people both outside and inside the team to manage much of the team's contacts and relationships with the larger organization.
5. Create opportunities for others. The leader's challenge is to provide performance opportunities both for the team and for individuals on it.
6. Do real work. Everyone on the team, including the leader, should do real work in roughly equivalent amounts.

ESTABLISHING RELATIONSHIPS

Withrow (1999) describes what America expects its schools to do today and in the future:

> What we expect of our schools is cumulative. Schools are still expected to produce ethical, moral, civilized people who can help us sustain our democracy. They are expected to prepare a new wave of immigrants for life in America. And as demands increase, expectations grow, and life accelerates, our schools are expected to produce people who can effectively lead us into a global knowledge/information age.... Transformation expected of us is not new. It is simply one of the great benefits and ongoing challenges of living in a free and dynamic society—a society we can only keep that way through sound education.

Given such lofty goals, it is not surprising that many observers believe that establishing collaborative initiatives is the only way schools can fulfill public expectations. As Giles (1999) says,

> The mixed results of the plethora of reform initiatives over the past several years suggest...that collaborative initiatives...which mobilize local community resources and institutions, engage parents and educators in a process of critical reflection about their schools, and use power effectively, offer the best possibility for addressing the very serious problems faced by schools and communities today.

Parson (1999), observing that "[s]chools have talked about becoming more collaborative for more than a decade", suggests a set of components on which to base a collaborative relationship:

- *Credibility.* The initiators must have a high level of credibility.
- *Shared concerns.* Concerns that are shared are the force that brings people together.
- *Trust building.* Before any collaborative actions can be taken, partners must begin the process of building mutual trust.
- *Resources.* To be successful, every collaborative effort must have resources committed to its program of work.
- *Shared decision making.* Decision making must be done openly with the participation of all partners.
- *Consensus process.* Consensus must be arrived at to obtain the support of all partners.
- *Realistic early goals.* The early goals should be obtainable in a fairly short period of time in order to build momentum.
- *Evaluation.* A commitment must be made to evaluate the results of the collaborative effort.
- *Celebration.* Every success achieved should be celebrated.
- *Moving to a higher level.* As success is achieved in the initial stages, subsequent goals should be set at higher, more challenging levels.

Parson adds two provisions that should be acknowledged and accepted by those establishing the collaborative. First, there should be a *provision for bailout.* Any individual or group should be able to exit gracefully if the proposed collaboration doesn't fit its situation or circumstances. Second, there should also be a *provision for being prepared to fold the tent.* If the reasons for forming a specific collaborative disappear, there may be a need to move on to other concerns, perhaps with other partners.

Mattessich and Monsey (1993) reviewed the research on a variety of successful collaboratives and identified factors that increase the chances for success. They grouped those factors into six general categories.

- *Environment.* If a history of collaboration or cooperation exists in the community, potential partners are more likely to have an understanding of the required roles and expectations, and to trust the process. The collaborative group (and, by implication, the agencies in the group) is perceived as a leader—at least in relation to the goals and activities it intends to accomplish. Political leaders, opinion makers, persons who control resources, and the general public support (or at least do not oppose) the missions of the collaborative group.
- *Membership characteristics.* Members of the collaborative group share an understanding and respect for each other and their respective organizations: how they operate, their cultural norms and values, limitations, and expectations. The collaborative group includes representatives from each segment of the community that will be affected by its activities. Members see collaboration as in their own self-interest, and collaborating partners believe the benefits of collaboration will offset costs, such as loss of autonomy and turf. Collaborating partners are able to compromise, recognizing that the many

decisions within a collaborative effort cannot possibly fit perfectly the preferences of every member.

- *Process/structure.* Members of the collaborative group feel ownership of both the way the group works and the results or product of its work. Every level (upper management, middle management, operation) within each organization in the collaborative group participates in decision making. The collaborative group remains open to varied ways of organizing itself and accomplishing its work. Collaborating partners clearly understand their roles, rights, and responsibilities, and how to carry out those responsibilities. The collaborative group has the ability to sustain itself in the midst of major changes, even if it needs to change some major goals, members, etc., in order to deal with changing conditions.
- *Communication.* Collaborative members interact often, update one another, discuss issues openly, convey all necessary information to one another and to people outside the group. Partners establish formal and informal communication links. Channels of communication exist on paper, so that information flow occurs. In addition, members establish personal connections—producing a better, more informed, and more cohesive group working on a common project.
- *Purpose.* Goal and objectives of the collaborative group are concrete and clear to all partners and can be realistically attained. Collaborating partners have the same vision, with clearly agreed-upon mission, objectives, and strategies. The shared vision may exist at the outset of collaboration, or the partners may develop a vision as they work together. There is a unique purpose so that the mission and goals or approach of the collaborative group differ, at least in part, from the mission and goals or approach of the member organizations.
- *Resources.* The collaborative group has an adequate, consistent financial base to support its operations. The individual who convenes the collaborative group has organizing and interpersonal skills and carries out the role with fairness. Because of these characteristics (and others), the convener is granted respect or "legitimacy" by the collaborative partners.

The National Association of Partners in Education (NAPE) has developed a 12-step process (www.napehg.org/4 1999) to help schools develop partnerships with the community. NAPE suggests that it is important to think about all the steps at the outset and refer to them repeatedly during development and implementation and points out that some steps may be more important than others depending on the situation.

- *Awareness.* Informing key populations that a partnership is being considered as a means of improving the school and the community.
- *Needs assessment.* Gathering and interpreting information in order to formulate the goals and objectives of the partnership.
- *Potential resources.* Identifying people, materials, equipment, and funding available within a school, school district, business, agency, and community to help meet identified needs.
- *Goals and objectives.* Determining a broad-based statement of purpose for the partnership and statements of intended outcome that are measurable, specific, and determine focus of evaluation.
- *Program design.* Selecting specific strategies for achieving the partnership's goals and objectives.
- *Management.* Defining the partnership's the administrative structure and the rules and regulations under which it will function.
- *Recruitment.* Engaging people, organizations, and resources in partnership and responding to needs identified by school and community.
- *Assignment.* Matching people with the jobs that need to be done and allocating financial resources and materials to identified needs.
- *Orientation.* Preparing people for involvement and ensuring understanding of roles, rules, policies, and procedures.
- *Training.* Preparing individuals or groups to perform specific tasks in predetermined situations.
- *Retention.* Making the efforts necessary to keep individuals involved and maintain a strong effective partnership.
- *Evaluation.* Monitoring and data collection, interpretation, and analysis for the purposes of decision making and program improvement.

BARRIERS TO COLLABORATION

A major obstacle to collaboration is that different agencies may have different definitions of the same problem. This obstacle gets expressed in the actual process of collaboration, in the mindsets of people engaged in the collaborative effort, in the

ways in which resources are allocated, and in the policies that govern the delivery of services.

Process-oriented barriers include the methods of communication and problem solving used to establish goals and objectives, agree on roles, make decisions, and resolve conflicts. These barriers relate to the formulation of a broad and practical vision, including overcoming power and control issues; lack of trust; defeatism/skepticism; "it's not my job" attitude; different definitions of the problem; ignorance of how others work; danger of setting lowest common denominator goals; and different philosophies. Barriers caused by the individual members of the collaborative may include the difficulty of ensuring a full buy-in by staff, and overcoming resistance to change.

Resource barriers can take several forms. There may be insufficient funds to provide necessary services; erosion of trust among potential collaborators who increasingly must compete for scarce resources; and conflict over who pays for what. Lack of time to engage in collaborative activities is also a resource barrier. Resource issues are intimately related to process factors, since the dictates of self-preservation make it difficult to share scarce resources.

Policy can also be a barrier to collaboration. The federal, state, and local rules, regulations, policies, guidelines, and definitions each agency brings to the table affect the ease or difficulty with which partners can work together. Included in this category are semantic differences (e.g., using similar words with different meanings or terms with unclear meanings); and differences in state and federal statutory requirements (e.g., eligibility and reporting regulations; separate funding streams; confidentiality rules; and other policies that interfere with joint efforts).

THE PARTNERSHIP CONTINUUM

In education, "partnership" encompasses three levels of working relationships that can be viewed as a continuum. *Cooperation* is at one end, implying a simple working together toward a common end. *Coordination* is in the middle range, implying a sharing of resources and joint planning, development, and implementation of programs. *Collaboration* is at the other end, implying a higher degree of sharing and a more intensive, concerted effort, including joint allocation of resources and joint monitoring and evaluation.

Using the continuum in the context of service delivery, Melaville and Blank (1991) explain:

> A collaborative strategy is called for in localities where the need and intent is to change fundamentally the way services are designed and delivered throughout the system. In those communities not yet ready for collaborative partnerships, cooperative initiatives to coordinate existing services offer a reasonable starting point for change. Ultimately, however, these efforts must become increasingly collaborative if they hope to achieve the goal of comprehensive service delivery.

There is no single model for an educational partnership. The extent of cooperation or collaboration depends on each partner's willingness to share resources—human, physical, and financial. A continuum of school-community partnerships (ERIC Review 1992) might include:

The Partnership Continuum

ONE-ON-ONE	COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS	COMPREHENSIVE COLLABORATIVES
(Sponsor → Beneficiary)	*(Sponsor ↔ Beneficiary)*	*(Sponsors ↔ Beneficiaries)*
• Tutoring • Mentoring • Field trips • Guest speakers • Summer jobs • Paid work-study • Scholarships • Incentives and recognition awards • Demonstrations • Use of business facilities • Loaned executives • Volunteer services • Mini-grants for teachers • Teaching assistance • Donations of equipment/supplies • Public relations	• Needs assessment • Planning • Research and development • Training in new technology Teacher/administrator professional development • Advocacy—policy, laws • School-based health clinics • Magnet schools • Funds to support innovation • Advice on restructuring schools • Focused programs, e.g., dropout or teen pregnancy prevention	• Needs assessment • Broad-based multi-agency planning • Research and development • Long-term institutional commitment • Commonly defined vision • Goals/objectives by consensus • Shared authority/decision making • New roles/relationships • Advocacy—policy/laws • Integration of multiple crossinstitutional programs • Comprehensive services focused on whole child • Full-service school

The type of involvement and partnership will vary from school to school depending on local needs and circumstances. The goal is to build a shared ownership for education and the well-being of children. The following outlines a partnership continuum of activities and responsibilities representing progressivley greater levels of collaboration, shared responsibility, and participation in decision making (Saskatchewan Education 1999):

Continuum of Parent and Con

Meeting Basic Needs	Developing Openness & Two-Way Communication	Supporting Learnin in Home & the Community
Activity & Program Examples *At home...* • safe, caring home environment • adequate food, clothing, rest and shelter *In school/community...* • nutrition programs • clothing exchanges "safe rooms" • parenting education • community kitchens • home-school liaison	Activity & Program Examples *At home...* • advise teacher of students' likes and dislikes, changes to routine, etc. • discuss concerns and successes with teacher • review information sent home from school attend meeting and school events *In school/community...* • welcoming school environment • parent, student, teacher conferences • school newsletters • home visits • surveys of parent opinion • message board of school events and activities • newspaper columns	Activity & Program Examples *At home...* • being interested and encouraging children's learni • creating a place t study/work • reading to childr • making learning part of everyday life *In community...* • mentoring • creating safe, sta communities *In the school...* • family literacy programs • assignments to encourage family involvement • learning contract among parents, teachers, and students • summer/holiday learning projects
Structure • self-help groups • school-level organizations parent council, school council, home-school association • community association • school-community liaison program	Structure • school-community liaison program • school-level organizations—parent council, school council, home-school association • community association • district boards/committees	Structure • school-communi liaison program • school-level organizations —parent council school council, home-school association • community association • district boards/committees

mmunity Involvement Partnerships

	Participating in Voluntary & Advisory Roles	Building Collaboration & Partnerships	Participating in Governance
	Activity & Program Examples • attending/assisting with school events • fund raising • volunteering • room for volunteers/parents • guest speakers • tutoring students • newsletter coordination • leading clubs • parent centers • providing advice on school issues/ programs • advising on school policy issues such as code of conduct, discipline, curriculum, program adaptation, schedules, etc.	Activity & Program Examples • financial and "in kind" contributions • business partnerships and sponsorships • integrated services • community development • youth community service/work • in-school daycare • early intervention • preschool • shared facilities • adopt-a-school • community service work	Activity & Program Examples • planning, problem solving • making decisions about - budget - program adaptations - priorities - criteria for staff and/or staffing • training in leadership and decision-making skills • program assessment • shared management of project, program or school • partnerships with organization, agencies, and governments
	Structure • volunteer programs • school-community liaison program • school-level organizations— parent council, school council, home-school association • community association • district boards/ committees	Structure • advisory committees • interagency committees • school-level organizations parent council, school council, home-school association • community association • district boards/ committees	Structure • school councils, parent advisory council, school community council • district boards/ committees • co-management board • associate schools • district board of education

TYPES OF EDUCATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

In an examination of school-community initiatives, Melaville (1998) found that most initiatives were built around one or more of the following goals:

- Improved educational quality and academic outcomes for youth.
- More efficient and effective health and social service delivery for children and families.
- Increased recognition of the developmental needs of young people and the importance of building on their strengths.
- Expanded efforts to strengthen the human, social, and economic foundations of neighborhoods and communities.

Melaville noted: "Growing appreciation of the need to blend purposes and strategies around a central vision and mission is...likely to make collaboration easier among multiple reform initiatives in the community." Some of those reform initiatives are described below.

Volunteer programs. Volunteer programs are the oldest and best known home-school-community initiatives. They involve recruiting and training individuals to work in support of schools and education. Typically, school volunteers fall into one of four categories. One-time volunteers are those who have limited time, usually part or all of one school day. They may volunteer to help with field trips, assist with a special event, share a special skill or expertise on a particular topic, or participate in a career education day. Off-campus volunteers are those who can work only from home or some other nonschool site; they may have small children, or be older or handicapped. These individuals often help develop educational materials or do clerical work such as typing or checking papers, provide a meeting place and leadership for off-campus youth clubs such as Scouts and Brownies, or provide a service such as child care or transportation to allow others to visit a teacher or work at school. They may help with telephone campaigns or other publicity needs or make telephone contacts to request community agencies' and groups' assistance in a special project. Short-term volunteers may offer mini-courses or short-term enrichment programs, help with building improvements, assist with assemblies and plays, or provide some other in-school service on a short-term project. Extended volunteers—those who can work several hours a week over a semester or a year—tutor, mentor, serve as classroom and library aide, supervise lunchroom/playground activities, provide classroom or office clerical services, help with a particular subject such as art or music, or assist in coordinating the volunteer program.

Traditionally, parents—primarily mothers—have been the source of school volunteers. But as family demographics and work schedules have changed so have the sources of volunteers and the character of volunteer programs. Schools have had to reach beyond families to the community and the student body to recruit volunteer assistance. Senior citizens have become a welcome pool of assistance in all kinds of volunteer activities, especially tutoring and mentoring, and as foster grandparents. Students have also been effective as peer tutors and mentors.

Developing a volunteer program is often a school's first step in building partnerships to meet educational needs. Obviously, teachers' and administrators' commitment to using volunteers, knowledge of the role of volunteers, and attitudes and skills in using volunteers are basic to success.

Careful, thorough planning and organization are needed in recruiting volunteers and assigning tasks. Stehle (1993) emphasizes advance planning in order to avoid several common recruitment mistakes. Time should be taken to do a careful needs assessment so that recruiting efforts are targeted to needed job skills. A scattershot approach will probably not attract the specific kinds of volunteers and skills required. Time must also be taken to interview prospective volunteers to make sure that there are *meaningful* assignments that will take full advantage of their skills and interests. Issues of school safety and security clearances must also be considered.

Time and attention must also be devoted to the retention of volunteers. Decker (1994) offers the following advice for retaining volunteer support:

- Nurture volunteers' feeling of belonging to the educational team. With a sense of pride and ownership, they can become tremendous boosters of public education.
- Monitor the volunteer/teacher placements. Be sensitive to problems and encourage flexibility when change is indicated.
- Provide ongoing inservice training when appropriate.
- Train teachers to work with volunteers. Many

problems can be avoided if volunteers and teachers have mutual expectations.
- Provide feedback about volunteers' performance and suggestions for teaching, discipline, or human relations techniques.
- Hold informal and formal recognition activities throughout the year.
- Use suggestions from evaluations when possible.

Afterschool Programs. Afterschool programs are increasing rapidly, with strong support from the federal government and from state and local policy makers. The rationale is threefold:
- Attendance in afterschool programs can provide youth with supervision during a time when many might be exposed to or engage in antisocial or destructive behaviors.
- Afterschool programs can provide enriching experiences that broaden children's perspective and improve their socialization.
- Afterschool programs can help improve the academic achievement of students who are not accomplishing as much as they need to during regular school hours.

Afterschool programs may address children's academic, recreational, or cultural needs or a blending of all three. The amount and type of school-community collaboration in afterschool programs is affected by the design and staffing of the program and whether the program operates in the same building as the school-day program or in another location.

Although afterschool programs differ in purpose, staffing, and funding, Fashola (1999) points out that most face a common set of implementation decisions: who will attend the program, what to do if children attend irregularly or drop out, how to obtain funding, and how to recruit and train paid staff and volunteers. He acknowledges that research on afterschool programs is at a rudimentary stage but points out that there are a number of promising models.

Among programs intended to increase academic achievement, those that provide greater structure, a stronger link to the school-day curriculum, well-qualified and well-trained staff, and opportunities for one-to-one tutoring seem particularly promising. Programs of all types, whether academic, recreational, or cultural in focus, appear to benefit from consistent structure, active community involvement, extensive training for staff and volunteers, and responsiveness to participants' needs and interests.

Advisory committees and task forces. These well-known forms of school-community involvement are commonly used to involve the community in educational planning and decision making. A task force is usually an ad hoc group formed to focus on a specific issue or assignment. An advisory committee is typically a continuing body that focuses on broad aspects of a school program. Although some advisory groups are elected, membership is usually developed through appointment and volunteering. An advisory group may report to the superintendent, the school board, the principal, or the community.

Establishing effective advisory committees and task forces requires a strong commitment and a great deal of work. But there are a number of good—even self-interest—reasons for undertaking the serious work involved in developing and nurturing effective advisory groups. First, and most obviously, community members who become significantly involved with schools develop an understanding of competing interests, are more willing to accept compromise, and tend to support decisions that are made after broad-based consultation. There are some other advantages. Special interests tend to balance out. Policy decisions are more likely to be based on complete and accurate information about the community. And a sense of community cohesion usually begins to develop.

The impact and credibility of an advisory group depends less on the way members are selected than on the degree to which the membership accurately reflects the total community in ethnic, socioeconomic, and gender categories. The group's impact and credibility also depend on the support it gets from school staff, the substance of its assignment, and clarity of the task to everyone involved.

Decker and Decker (1991) offer the following guidelines for advisory groups:
- State the goals clearly and precisely.
- Involve a representative cross section of the community and the school, but keep the group size manageable.
- Decide on a leadership structure and chain of command.
- Establish a time schedule with specific intermediary goals, and keep the group on course.
- Determine if—and precisely how—the group will work with or respond to the news media.
- Staff the advisory group properly in terms of administrative and other support personnel.

- Maintain a clear understanding of what will happen to the group's report.
- Discharge and thank the committee in a meaningful and appropriate manner.

The source of the following "Fable about Practically Nothing" is unknown, but it serves to illustrate how the best intentioned advisory group can go wrong.

> Once upon a time, there was an advisory council that had only four members. It was an organization not unlike our civic clubs, service clubs, church councils, even our professional and technical societies. The four members were named *Somebody, Everybody, Anybody,* and *Nobody.* All four declared that they supported the aims and objectives of the advisory council. But *Everybody* was either a golfer, bowler, gardener, or fisherman and used her spare time and talents in that way, or stayed at home with friends. *Anybody* wanted to go to meetings of the council, but didn't because he was afraid that *Somebody* might give him a job to do, and he just wanted to belong, not work. *Nobody* went to the meeting of the advisory council.
>
> Of the four, *Nobody* was the best. For instance, when the advisory council needed a chair for an important committee, *Everybody* thought that Anybody should be willing to take on an important job like that, and *Somebody* observed that *Everybody* ought to. Guess who finally jot the job? That's right—*Nobody.* And when the four learned that there was a new resident in the community who was eligible for membership on the advisory council, *Everybody* thought that *Somebody* ought to invite her to join. *Anybody* could have extended the invitation, but did not. And can you guess who finally did get around to asking her? That's right—*Nobody* took the job.
>
> And do you know what finally happened to that advisory council? With *Nobody* doing the jobs that had to be done, the advisory council amounted to Practically Nothing, which is the real name of a great many councils, despite their fancy assumed names and high ideals. Now the moral of this story is this: When you join an advisory council, you must be willing to work at accomplishing its aims and objectives, for if you do not, others will call you *Nobody,* regardless of your real name, and your advisory council will become Practically Nothing.

School-business partnerships. The most publicized school-community partnerships have been those between schools and businesses. Businesses have offered student internships, job counseling, and job site visits. They have participated in career fairs, assisted administrators in solving management problems, donated money and equipment, funded newsletters and voice-mail systems, served on task forces of various types, provided experts to speak in classrooms and at assemblies, and even used their influence to affect political and financial issues of concern to schools.

Involving the business community in helping to prepare students for the workplace is not a new idea. Vocational students have benefited from participation in cooperative vocation education programs for decades. What is new is the way in which traditional efforts are expanding to reach students from elementary school to college, and the positive way people in the business world are responding to this initiative.

For more than 25 years, Communities in Schools' mission (*About Communities in Schools* 1999) has been to connect community resources with schools in order to help young people learn, stay in school, and prepare for life. CIS brings resources into the schools from community agencies and businesses that have agreed to a collaboration. Historically, businesses have been the backbone of this endeavor.

Since 1994, the U. S. School-to-Work Opportunities Act has been providing seed money to schools to create partnerships with businesses that seek to: (1) make education relevant by allowing students to explore different careers and to see what skills are required in a working environment; (2) obtain skills from structured training and work-based learning experiences, including the necessary skills of a particular career as demonstrated in a working environment. School-to-Work programs also provide students with valued credentials by establishing industry-standard benchmarks and developing education and training standards that ensure appropriate education for each career.

New Jersey was one of eight states to receive initial funding from the 1994 Act. Reporting on New Jersey's School-to-Work initiatives, now called School-to Careers initiatives, Timberman (1999)

describes a guide that promotes the advantages of such collaborative relationships to potential partnership employers. The guide lists these benefits: an expanded pool of qualified workers; a reduction in turnover; a voice in curriculum development to meet industry needs; a reduction in training costs; and an ability to improve the quality of life and work skills in the community. She also reported on studies of school-to-work in Philadelphia and Boston indicating that "students who worked had higher attendance rates, lower dropout rates, lower suspension rates, higher graduation rates, and higher promotion rates than students who did not work."

There is no single School-to-Work model, but each local initiative must contain three core elements (*School-to-Work* 1999):

- School-based learning—classroom instruction based on high academic and business-defined occupational skill standards.
- Work-based learning—career exploration, work experience, structured training, and mentoring at job sites.
- Connecting activities—courses integrating classroom and on-the-job instruction; matching students with participating employers; training of mentors; and building of other bridges between school and work.

Workplace schools are still a relatively rare form of public-private partnership, but they are growing in number. Companies such as Honeywell, IDS Financial Services, Target, Mall of America, First Bank, American Bankers Insurance Group, and Hewlett-Packard have set up schools for their employees' children. Workplace schools, sometimes called satellite schools, are hybrids: a business provides a classroom building and maintains it, while the public school district provides teachers, books, and lessons.

Broder (1999) reports on the new Baldrige in Education initiative, a project of the National Alliance for Business (NAB) that has the backing of major business organizations, the National Education Association, and many state officials. The late Malcolm Baldrige, Secretary of Commerce in the Reagan administration, recognized that American companies had to restructure themselves to compete effectively worldwide, so he started a competition for companies that involve management and workers in a drive for quality and customer satisfaction. The new initiative applies the Baldrige process to public education. Broder says the project focuses on long-term results because, quoting the NAB project director, while "random acts of improvement can boost school performance, it is only when those changes are properly aligned in a strategic plan that major, long-term results emerge."

In addition to direct involvement with schools and school programs, the private sector can encourage and support family involvement in education. The U. S. Department of Education (1994) suggests some ways:

> Although a number of businesses have been investing in overall school reform, many are now realizing the importance of increasing family involvement. "Family-friendly" businesses have at least one of the following policies: allowing time for employees to get involved with schools; initiating, implementing, and funding specific programs that promote family involvement in education; and providing resources to employees on how to become more involved in their own children's education.

Employers can also encourage and recognize employees who volunteer in schools. They can give employees release time or provide flexible scheduling, or give tangible rewards for volunteering. They can also encourage all employees to continue their education, especially those who do not have high school diplomas. Many employers have discovered the benefits of adjusting work schedules or providing scholarship assistance for employees who wish to upgrade their skills or retrain in a new area.

Service learning. Service learning is a growing type of collaboration between schools and community agencies. Summarizing the language of the National and Community Service Act of 1990, the National Youth Leadership Council (1990) defines it:

> Service learning is student learning and development through active participation in thoughtfully organized service experiences that meet real community needs and that are coordinated in collaboration with the school and community. The service learning is integrated into the students' academic curriculum and includes structured time to talk, write, and think about what they did and saw during the actual service activity.

This type of collaboration views young people as resources rather than as problems and uses the community as a laboratory for youth development. Service opportunities emphasize the accomplishment of tasks to meet human and community needs, and using the service experience to accomplish intentional learning goals. Students have opportunities to use newly acquired skills and knowledge in real-life situations in their own communities. The service opportunities enhance what is taught in school by extending student learning beyond the classroom and into the community and help foster the development of civic responsibility and a sense of caring for others.

The development of service learning programs received increased impetus from the 1997 Presidents' Summit for America's Future. Summit participants identified "opportunities for service" as the fifth developmental resource need for all youth. Benson and Walker (1998) summarized the important benefits to be gained by adding service learning to a school's educational curriculum.

- Service answers the need of all young people, rich and poor, for practical experience and an understanding of democratic values in action, and the need to learn how to work with people of different backgrounds and experiences. Working together in common sustained service is one way to close the racial and ethnic gaps that divide America.
- Service is a vital way to learn citizenship, responsibility and discipline; to build skills, enhance self-esteem, develop problem-solving abilities, introduce new career options, and prepare young people for future work.
- Service can improve academic motivation, school attendance, and school performance, and can establish a pattern of future service that will continue through a lifetime of active citizenship.

Service learning can be an important vehicle for bridging the gap that often exists between students and schools, schools and communities, and students and communities. Besides the academic, social, personal, and career benefits to students, service learning activities benefit the school, the community, and the service learning partners. Lyday and others (1998) summarize these benefits:

Benefits to School	Benefits to Community	Benefits to Partners
• *Makes curriculum relevant*	• *Mobilizes youth as a resource instead of a community problem*	• *Provides much needed resources*
• *Develops students' responsibility for own learning*	• *Addresses real community needs*	• *Helps achieve partner goals*
• *Links school to community in positive ways*	• *Builds good, productive citizens*	• *Introduces next-generation leaders to the partner's important work*
• *Develops problem-solving, teaming, higher order thinking, time management, and other vital workplace skills*	• *Promotes a "sense of community" for many students who do not have stability in their lives*	• *Bonds agencies with schools and helps build new partnerships*
• *Expands learning environment beyond the classroom*	• *Develops next-generation leaders*	• *Provides opportunities to enhance public image*
• *Motivates reluctant learners*	• *Develops an ethic of service and commitment to the community*	• *Introduces students to career options in the partners' areas of service*
• *Promotes problem-solving and conflict management skills*	• *Provides shared responsibility for student learning*	• *Gives the partnership a different lens through which to view and assess its work*
• *Helps reduce school problems: behavior, attendance, tardiness*	• *Helps nurture and train the future workforce*	• *Challenges some ingrained views of doing business*
	• *Makes good economic sense*	• *Infuses youthful vitality*
	• *Helps build healthy communities*	

Service learning activities can be designed for students of all ages, kindergarten through adults. There are three basic types of activities: direct service, indirect service, and advocacy. The three types are distinguished by the purpose of the service activity, who is to be served, and how the service will be delivered. Lyday and others (1998) explain:

- *Direct service activities* require the student to come into direct, personal contact with the recipients of the service. This type of service is often the most rewarding to students, since they are directly involved with the recipient and receive immediate feedback. Direct service also requires the strongest partnerships and greatest amount of planning and preparation, since students must have the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to make the experience beneficial for everyone involved. Examples include working with senior citizens, reading to or tutoring another person, serving meals to the homeless.
- *Indirect service activities* are easier to manage because students work behind the scenes and much of the work can be done at school. This type of service might include collecting toys at holiday time, landscaping the school yard, cleaning up a vacant lot, gathering needed items for a homeless family. The required partnerships are more loosely structured than those required for direct service and do not require the same rigor of scheduling, coordination, training, and supervision.
- *Advocacy* requires that students lend their voices and use their talents to eliminate the causes of a specific problem. Students work to make the community aware of a problem and attempt to get the community involved in seeking a solution. This type of service might include research on a community problem; the development of brochures and pamphlets related to the problem; a series of presentations to other students or community members; a concerted effort to influence political, personal, or community decision making. The partnerships can range from loose coordination with a single agency to a complex array of relationships with multiple community groups.

The service learning project model also affects the nature of the partnership between the school and the agency or organization. In a one-shot model, teachers and students link one service project to their classroom studies, requiring coordination with one agency, one time, on a given date. In an ongoing project, teachers and students link service to their classroom studies on a regular basis throughout the semester or school year.

Ongoing, direct service projects require continuing communication, interaction, and planning with the agencies and clients involved. In the student placement model, students—individually or in teams—complete internships in a set number of hours in agencies and organization over the course of the semester or school year, and the agency becomes the students' classroom. The school-agency partnership is more involved, requiring contact, contracts, and written agreements between the school and partnering agencies to ensure meaningful experiences for both the students and the agencies in which they serve.

Many types of service-learning opportunities are possible, but successful programs appear to have common characteristics (National Youth Leadership Council 1989). They are an integral part of the educational program—not an add-on. Contact between schools and community agencies are structured to assure that mutual goals are met. They have practices in place that give students feedback from faculty and community sponsors and include a planned method for examining service experiences in relation to gains or changes in skills, knowledge, and attitudes. They give students genuine responsibility because consequences depend on their performance. They involve systematic monitoring—evaluation of student and client activities so that service experiences will be seen as important.

OTHER SCHOOL-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Other kinds of school partnerships with agencies and organizations are responding to the recognized need for more school-readiness programs, before and after-school enrichment and recreation programs, childcare, and the cooperative delivery of health and human services. The federal initiative, 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program, and a new national association, America's Promise—The Alliance for Youth, are urging public, private, and non-profit organizations to focus their combined talents and resources on improving the lives of the nation's youth. These two initiatives are among an

increasing number that are promoting the concept of school-community partnerships that turn public schools into full-service community centers that are open all day, all week, year-round, with onsite health and dental clinics, mental health counseling, child care, extended-day programs, tutoring, adult education, parent workshops, cultural programs, and summer camp. The daytime academic curriculum is fully integrated with the before-school, after-school, and evening programs, and the schools are open to everyone in the community—children, siblings, teens, parents, and other adults. (Parson 1999)

- Collaborative partnerships are based on trust and understanding that must be developed over time.

Full-service schools are based on the premise that no single agency or organization can substantially improve the lives of children and families, especially at-risk children and families. Dryfoos (1994) suggests some of the components that together make up a full-service school.

FULL-SERVICE SCHOOLS

Provided by School	Provided by Schools or Community Agencies	Support Services Provided by Community Agencies
• *Effective basic skills*	• *Child care*	• *Health/dental screening and services*
• *Individualized instruction*	• *Extended day programs*	• *Individual counseling*
• *Team teaching*	• *Comprehensive health education*	• *Substance abuse treatment*
• *Cooperative learning*	• *Health promotion*	• *Mental health services*
• *School-based management*	• *Preparation for the world of work (life planning)*	• *Nutrition/weight management*
• *Healthy school climate*	• *Adult education*	• *Referral with follow-up*
• *Alternatives to tracking*		• *Basic services: housing, food, clothing*
• *Parent involvement*		• *Recreation, sports, culture*
• *Effective discipline*		• *Mentoring*
		• *Family welfare services*
		• *Parent education, literacy*
		• *Child care*
		• *Employment training/jobs*
		• *Case management*

This kind of a comprehensive school-community collaboration obviously is not developed overnight and is built on the success of other attempts to use community partnerships to meet educational goals. Parson (1999) suggests that as collaborative efforts are begun and increase in complexity, several common elements must be incorporated into the design:

- Collaborating agencies and organizations must work as equal partners, sharing all aspects of their joint efforts.
- Services must focus on families in order to have an effect on children and their ability to benefit from educational programs, and be able to respond to the diversity in children and families.
- Educational, social, and community services must be integrated into a seamless experience for children and their families.
- The issue of "school-based" as opposed to "school-linked" services is not as important as the question of how each individual community can make the best use of its resources to improve the quality of education and life.

COLLABORATION: A NEW KIND OF INVOLVEMENT

Bruner (1991) recommends keeping seven key points in mind in developing collaborative relationships:

- Collaboration is not a quick fix.
- Collaboration is a means to an end, not an end in itself.
- Developing interagency collaboration is extremely time-consuming and process-intensive.
- Interagency collaboration does not guarantee the development of a client-centered service system nor the establishment of a trusting relationship between an at-risk child or family and a helping adult.
- Creative problem-solving skills must be developed and nurtured in those expected to collaborate. Among these skills are the ability to deal with the ambiguity and stress that increased discretion brings.
- Collaboration is too important to be trivialized.

Planning and organization are essential to success in all types of partnerships and collaborative initiatives. It is crucial not to lose sight of the fact that collaboration takes place among people, not institutions. People must be the focus of every collaborative effort.

A national survey by the League of Women Voters (Duskin 1989) found that "contrary to conventional wisdom, Americans are engaged in civil society. They just aren't participating in traditional civic institutions. Instead, citizens are actively engaged in their communities and are interested in becoming more involved." The survey found that 56 percent of Americans are "somewhat involved" in community activities and issues, and 46 percent would like to be more involved. According to the survey,

> [A] new form of involvement is emerging as America heads into a new century—a trend that reflects the growing pressures that people experience juggling the multiple tasks and responsibilities of daily life. Today, community engagement is localized and personalized, and it tends to be channeled through individual and group-based activities rather than through established organizations. Above all, people want to spend their volunteer time accomplishing real change. One of the key factors in whether people are going to get involved nowadays is whether they feel they are going to be able to make a difference....[B]y and large, Americans believe they can be most effective in small groups working on specific issues. Accordingly, people are spending more time solving neighborhood problems than trying to influence politicians. ...There is a growing tendency to want to connect personal responsibility and individual freedom. They [the participants in the study] see the community as the place to do this.

REFERENCES

Vital Communities in Schools. 1999. www.cisnet.org/~about.

Annenberg Institute for School Reform. 1999. *Reasons for Hope: Voices for Change*. Brown University, Providence, RI. www.aisr.brown.edu.

Bamber, C.; Berla, N.; and Henderson, A. T. 1996. *Learning from Others: Good Programs and Successful Campaigns*. Washington, DC: Center for Law and Education.

Benson, P. L., and Walker, G. 1999. *Why the Five Fundamental Resources Matter: A Reassessment of the Evidence*. America's Promise, www.americas-promise.org.

Blank, M. A., and Kershaw, C. 1999. "Designing Collaborative Partnerships," *NASSP Practitioner*, 25, 4 (April). www. nassp.org.

Broder, D. S. 1989. "Business Has a Vital Role in Education, (Charleston, South Carolina) *Post and Courier*, July 15.

Bruner, C. 1991. *Thinking Collaboratively: Ten Questions and Answers to Help Policy Makers Improve Children's Services*. Washington, DC: Education and Human Services Consortium.

Decker, L. E., and Associates. 1994. *Home-School-Community Relations: Trainers Manual and Study Guide*. Charlottesville, VA: Mid-Atlantic Center for Community Education.

Decker, L. E., and Boo, M. R. 1998. *Community Schools: Serving Children, Families and Communities*. Fairfax, VA: National Community Education Association.

Decker, L. E., and Decker, V. A. 1991. *Home-School-Community Involvement*. Arlington, VA: American Association of School Administrators.

Dryfoos, J. 1994. *Full-Service Schools*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Duskin, M. S. 1989. "Community Activism: An Untapped Reservoir," *The National Voter*, 49, 1 (September/October).

ERIC Review. 1992. "Collaboration to Build Competence." Fall issue.

Fashola, O. S. 1999. "Implementing Effective After-School Programs," *Here's How*, 17, 3 (March). National Association of Elementary School Principals.

Giles, H. C. 1999. "Parent Engagement as a School Reform Strategy," *ERIC Digest*. //eric-web.tc.columbia.edu/digests/dig135.

Hart, J. K. 1913. *Educational Resources of Villages and Rural Communities*. New York: Macmillian.

Harvard Family Research Project. 1995. *Raising Our Future: Families, Schools and Communities Joining Together.* Cambridge, MA.

International Fast Facts About PDK/Gallup Poll 9/98. Phi Delta Kappa International. www.pdkintl.org/whatis/ff4poll.htm.

Institute for Educational Leadership. 1993. *Leadership for Collaboration: A National Dialogue.* Washington, DC.

Katzenbach, J. R., and Smith, D. K. 1993. *The Wisdom of Teams.* New York: Harper-Collins.

Lyday, W. J.; Winecoff, H. L.; and Hiott, B. C. 1998. *Connecting Communities through Service Learning.* Columbia, SC: South Carolina Department of Education.

Mattessich, P. W., and Monsey, B. R. 1993. *Collaboration: What Makes It Work.* St. Paul, MN: Amherst H. Wilder Foundation.

Melaville, A. 1998. *Learning Together: The Developing Field of School Community Initiatives.* Flint, MI: Charles Stewart Mott Foundation.

Melaville, A., and Blank, M. 1991. *What It Takes: Structuring Interagency Partnerships to Connect Children and Families with Comprehensive Services.* Washington, DC: Education and Human Services Consortium.

National Association of Partners in Education. 1999. *12-Step Partnership Process.* www.napehg.org/4.

National Opinion Research Center. 1993. "Public Opinion and Demographic Report: Confidence in Institutions." *American Enterprise.* 4 (November).

National PTA. 1998. *National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs.* Chicago, IL.

National Youth Leadership Council. 1989. *Growing Hope: A Sourcebook on Integrating Youth Service into the School Curriculum.* St Paul, MN: Center for Youth Development and Research, University of Minnesota.

National Youth Leadership Council. 1990. *National Service Learning Initiative.* St Paul, MN: Center for Youth Development and Research, University of Minnesota.

Parson, S. R. 1989. *Transforming Schools into Community Learning Centers.* Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education.

Saskatchewan Education. 1989. *Parent and Community Partnerships in Education: Policy Framework.* Regina.

School-to-Work. 1999. www.stw.ed.gov/general/whatis.

Stehle, V. 1993. "Finding New Ways to Recruit and Keep Today's Volunteers." *Chronicle of Philanthropy.* June 29.

Timberman, L. 1999. "Foster a Relationship between the Business Community and Schools." *Journal of Educational Relations.* 20, 2 (2nd Quarter).

U. S. Department of Education. 1994. *Strong Families, Strong Schools: Building Community Partnerships for Learning.* Washington, DC: U. S. Department of Education.

Withrow, F., with Long, H., and Marx, G. 1999. *Preparing Schools and School Systems for the 21st Century.* Arlington, VA: American Association of School Administrators.

WEBSITES

America's Promise
www.americaspromise.org

Association for Volunteer Administration
www.avaintl.org

Charles Stewart Mott Foundation
www.mott.org

Corporation for National Service
www.cns.gov/learn/index

Energize—Especially for Leaders of Volunteers
http://energizeinc.com

ERIC Digest
http://eric-web.tc.columbia.edu/digests

National Association of Partners in Education
www.napehg.org

National Dropout Prevention Center
www.dropoutprevention.org

National Network for Collaboration
http://crs.uvm.edu/nnco

National Network of Partnership Schools
http://scov.csos.jhu.edu/p2000

National PTA
www.pta.org

National Service Learning Clearinghouse
www.nicsl.coled.umn.edu

National Youth Leadership Council
www.nylc.org

Partnership for Family Involvement in Education
http://pfie.ed.gov

U. S. Department of Education
www.ed.gov

CHAPTER VI

SCHOOL PUBLIC RELATIONS—BRIDGING THE GAP

Voter support for public education has declined dramatically since the 1960s. Taxpayers have become increasingly reluctant to invest in something they perceive to be declining in quality, and many do not see themselves as benefiting directly from public education.

A comprehensive public relations program directed at the general public should try to build understanding that everyone in the community benefits when schools are able to carry out their mission of academic success for all children. The American Association of School Administrators (1993) in *How Our Investment in Education Pays Off* addressed the question, Why support public schools?

> Everyone in society reaps the benefits of education. Whether or not we have children in school, each of us will one day depend on an educated workforce to sustain a viable and healthy economy. If we hope to maintain or improve the quality of life in our communities, attract new industries, and continue to prosper as a nation, then top-notch schools are essential.

The AASA publication lists seven ways in which investing in education pays off for society:

- Provides greater earning power.
  - Education increases the likelihood of getting higher paying and professional jobs.
  - Education leads to greater employability and prepares students for the jobs of the future.
- Enriches the quality of life in our communities.
  - Education increases a community's standard of living.
  - Education creates and nurtures cultural experiences and opportunities.
  - Education reduces crime by providing skills, direction, and hope.
- Promotes equal opportunity.
  - Public schools educate all children.
  - Schools help all children achieve.
  - Education promotes an understanding of others.
- Maintains our free market economy.
  - Education ensures that children will be well prepared for the challenges of the workforce.
  - Schools give future workers the skills they need to compete.
  - Education preserves the middle class, preventing a two-tiered society of haves and have-nots.
  - Schools promote the understanding and use of technology.
- Enhances our personal fulfillment.
  - Education encourages student to strive for excellence.
  - Education gives students life skills. In addition to academic skills, students learn self-discipline, patience, responsibility, and sharing.
  - Education gives students the opportunity to explore interests and develop talents.
- Ensures our world leadership.
  - Other nations are investing in education, so maintaining our international competitiveness and our standard of living depends on an educated workforce. Guaranteeing our national security also rests ultimately on education.
  - Education helps our students compete in the global economy.
- Preserves our democracy.
  - Education creates a common vision of democracy which cannot thrive in an uneducated population or in a society in which only an elite few are educated.
  - Schools empower students to become active, concerned citizens.

THE HEART OF THE PROBLEM

The 1998 PDK/Gallup Poll points to a central problem in school public relations. The poll reveals that the schools to which people assign low grades *do not exist*. Respondents assign low grades to schools generally or to schools in communities in which the respondents do not live—not to the schools they know. The low-rated schools are perceived to exist on the basis of information received from the media. This conclusion may give comfort to educators in terms of their own schools, but the pollsters warn, "[E]ducators should...not ignore people's perceptions that public schools in other communities are bad."

The emphasis should not be on the erroneous conclusions based on media impressions and

misinformation, but on the lack of adequate high quality information issued by school leaders. A study of school districts in four Midwestern states (Kowalski and Wiedmer 1997) reconfirmed the findings of several earlier studies that school public relations were a low priority and most superintendents appeared to be PR passive. In the targeted districts—which included small city, town, rural, suburban, and urban, and ranged in size from less than 1,500 students to more than 7,000 students—researchers found:

- [illegible]
- [illegible] published a newsletter, and another [illegible] did so only once or twice a year.
- Nearly three out of four districts (74 percent) did not have regularly scheduled radio or television programs.
- Only 28 percent of the districts reported extensive efforts to prepare printed promotional materials (pamphlets, brochures), and only 8 percent reported extensive efforts to prepare visual promotional materials.
- The most widely used public relations technique was the issuance of news releases. Slightly more than half of the superintendents indicated that this was done frequently in their districts, although two superintendents said they never issued news releases.

DEFINING SCHOOL PUBLIC RELATIONS

Public relations is not publicity, a communications function designed to tell "good" news or to cover up "bad" news. Public relations is a school management function basic to the successful operation of schools. The National School Public Relations Association (1999) explains:

> Today's educational public relations program is a planned and systematic management function designed to help improve the programs and services of an educational organization. It relies on a comprehensive, two-way communication process involving both internal and external publics with a goal of stimulating a better understanding of the role, objectives, accomplishments, and needs of the organization. Educational public relations programs assist in interpreting public attitudes, identify and help shape policies and procedures in the public interest and carry on involvement and information activities which earn public understanding and support.

[illegible] public should be just as likely to persuade the organization's management to change attitudes or behavior as the organization is likely to change the public's attitudes or behavior."

WHY SCHOOL PUBLIC RELATIONS?

The National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA 1999) emphasizes the "public" in school public relations.

> Public relations needs to be in the public's interest. It needs to be grounded in solid two-way communication techniques and used as a vehicle to build trust, confidence and support for doing the best for all children in our schools. NSPRA firmly believes that school systems and schools have a public responsibility to tell parents and taxpayers how the schools are spending their money, and to seek their insights on helping the school district deliver a high quality, efficient educational program. The public has a right to know and be engaged in their schools. And they need someone in the schools trained in communication so they can get clear answers and guidance on how to work with their schools.

NSPRA contends that school public relations is needed now more than ever.

- This is the media age. School communications needs have increased dramatically and become more complex. Schools have to be able to communicate through both print and electronic media and in face-to-face contacts as well as to handle relations with the people of media.
- Public education is under attack from taxpayers, business groups, and others. There is a need to publicize positive news about student and staff achievements and progress toward

Education Week open houses are becoming common ways to build informed support and solid community relationships.

If educators are to respond to the public's increasing demand for information and accountability, they need to understand: (1) the difference between publicity and genuine public relations; (2) the difference between a publicity campaign of pure advocacy and a public relations program designed to facilitate mutual understanding; and (3) the power of public relations to serve as a two-way link between an organization and its publics in order to build understanding and resolve conflicts (Martinson 1995).

COMMUNICATION

George Bernard Shaw observed, "The greatest problem of communication is in the illusion that it has been accomplished."

All types of communication, oral and written, have five basic components:

- Source—the person with an idea to communicate.
- Message (structure and content)—what the person wants to communicate, expressed in words, gestures, and symbols.
- Channel—how the idea is expressed: sight, sound, touch, smell, taste, or a combination; selecting the right channel is important if the idea is to reach the intended receiver.
- Receiver—the person(s) to whom the message is directed. Considering the receiver's characteristics is crucial as the source develops the idea into a message and chooses a channel to express it.
- Effect—an indication of whether or not the receiver understood the message. (Decker and Associates 1994)

- Posture and body orientation affect how a message is interpreted. Standing erect and leaning slightly forward communicates to listeners that the speaker is approachable, receptive and friendly, whereas speaking with back turned or looking at the floor or ceiling conveys discomfort or lack of interest.
- Cultural norms dictate a comfortable distance for interaction with others.
- Variations in tone, pitch, rhythm, timbre, loudness, and inflections help keep listeners' attention.

Successful oral communication involves the listener as well as the speaker. Listening is not the same as hearing. Hearing is involuntary and refers simply to the reception of aural stimuli. Listening is a selective activity that involves both reception *and* interpretation of aural stimuli; it involves decoding sound into meaning. Listening may be passive or active. Passive listening is little more than hearing. Active listening involves listening with a purpose; it requires that the listener attend to the words and feelings of the sender for understanding.

It has been suggested that an active listener listens first to what someone is *saying*, then tries to listen to what a person is *not saying* and to what a person *wants to say but doesn't know how*. What the listener perceives as being said is as important as

what is actually being said. The listener's perceptions can affect both the meaning assigned to the words and the meaning of the complete message.

Effective communication occurs only if the receiver understands the exact information or idea that the sender intends to transmit. Several kinds of barriers can keep the message from being understood in the way the sender intends. These barriers may be internal or external.

- Filters—senders and receivers may have different opinions, concerns, or value systems.
- Jargon—specialized terms, acronyms, or unfamiliar expressions.
- Semantics—words that mean or imply different things to different people.
- Information overload—too much information and/or not enough time to comprehend.
- Non-verbal behavior—body language, facial expressions, gestures, proximity, vocal elements.
- Emotional climate—fear, anger, hostility, or distrust. (Decker and Associates 1994)

The most effective communication channel is oral and face-to-face, especially one-on-one. The more people involved, the greater the chance that the message will not be received or will be misunderstood. Written communication, however carefully thought out and precisely worded, is more likely to encounter barriers—filters, semantics, and information overload. Thus, when the intent of the communication is to advocate or persuade, person-to-person exchanges, telephone calls, dialogues, or workshops are preferable. When the intent is to inform, mass media—memos, newsletters, brochures, news releases, radio and television spots, videotapes—may be viable options.

Designing an effective school public relations program involves analyzing the needs and problems in communicating with two primary groups: the internal and external publics of the school.

THE INTERNAL PUBLIC

The school's internal public is defined as all those directly connected to and affected by the school and its operation: the professional and support staff, students, and families. These are also the people who affect the internal climate of a school. Their importance to a school's public relations cannot be overstated because the internal climate of a school affects student achievement, staff morale, and the type and level of community support a school enjoys. Norton (1998) emphasizes: [S]chools are people; the interpersonal relationships within the system are of paramount importance for bringing about a climate that serves to support and enhance the performance of all people in a school.... Effective communication necessitates a climate of trust, mutual respect, and clarity of function. Thus, a healthy school climate enhances the chances that communication within the system will be *heard and internalized*.

To many people, the staff *is* the school. As Yantis (1995) points out, "There is a close relationship between the internal social, psychological, and emotional environment of a school and the type of external relations a school has with its community. Low staff morale and poor personal relationships within the school quite often carry over to unsuccessful school-community relations." Bagin, Gallagher, and Kindred (1994) issue the same warning: "School and community relations are the result of a constant flow of images from the school and its employees, and negative comments or actions project a negative image."

Yantis (1995) emphasizes the administrator's role in developing a staff approach to community relations:

> Excellent school and community relations is a well-planned and continuous endeavor. School administrators cannot routinely manage the schools and assume that a reactive approach to the community will suffice. They must also recognize that the administration by itself cannot foster and maintain the level of community relationship that is necessary today. Effective administrators must undertake a proactive role in developing a total staff approach to community relations. In fact, when planning the community relations program, a wise administrator will quite likely consider the staff first, knowing that a knowledgeable staff with a positive attitude can go a long way toward building a positive and realistic public image of the schools.

All staff communicate about the school and are viewed by the community as primary sources of information about the school and school programs. Every staff member—from administrator and teacher to nurse, custodian, bus driver, and contract worker—needs to know his or her

importance as a member of the school public relations team and believe that responsibility for creating good public relations is within their job description. A school public relations plan needs to contain provisions for: (1) orientation of staff to their respective roles in public relations; (2) ongoing staff development on how to enhance public confidence in schools; and (3) ongoing sharing of information about programs, program changes, new directions, etc., to keep all staff up to date and informed.

Obviously, the school public relations plan should also provide for keeping students and parents informed. They, too, have a vested interest in high-quality public relations because of the importance of good community-school relations in carrying out the mission of the school: the academic success of all children.

THE EXTERNAL PUBLIC

To say that everyone who is not part of a school's internal public is part of its external public sounds simplistic, but it is true. Some people—alumni, grandparents, volunteers, and others who have some kind of a collaborative relationship with the school—may perceive themselves as having an indirect or secondary connection to a school. Others may think they have little or no connection to public schools and therefore have no reason to support them.

A comprehensive public relations program must include strategies directed at all segments of the external public to build and maintain the understanding that everyone in the community benefits from the academic success of all children. Whether or not community members believe that a school is able to carry out its mission of educating all children—or at least making good progress toward carrying out that goal—depends on how well the school's public relations program has informed its external public, appropriately involved them, sought their opinions or invited them to participate in decision making, and provided them with opportunities to be of service to the school.

WHY IMAGE MATTERS

Marketing consultants often advise clients that image is more important than reality because image—the sum of perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, ideas, and feelings about something—makes people act in certain ways and shapes attitudes towards a product, service, or organization. Carroll and Carroll (1994) emphasize that this advice applies to schools and school systems as much as it does to the private sector. "Whether perceptions or beliefs about a school system are deserved or undeserved, positive or negative, they account for much of what happens inside the voter booth when budget or referenda are on the ballot."

A public school's image depends on how the school *appears* to the public. A person's impression of a school is based partly on observed *objective* characteristics and partly on *subjective* experiences and reactions. Carroll and Carroll advise paying attention to things that can improve or degrade a school's image, including:

- Newspaper articles
- Publications distributed from the school
- Radio and TV reports
- Condition of physical plant, grounds, offices, classrooms, bulletin boards, cafeteria
- Curriculum design
- Standardized test scores, especially SAT
- Colleges where seniors are accepted
- Dropout and teen pregnancy rates
- Student and staff drug and alcohol use
- Athletic programs
- Special facilities and equipment (swimming pool, computer hardware and software)
- School-business partnerships
- Student and staff volunteerism in community
- Teacher and administrative staff outreach, service to community

Because image does matter, one of the first steps in developing a school's public relations program is finding out what the community's image of the public school actually is. Assessing a school's image benefits the school staff in several ways (Carroll and Carroll 1994). First, it requires a school to look at both its internal and external publics and systematically identify community perceptions so that planning can be based on fact, not speculation. Second, it helps to build better public relations by letting community members know that their opinions are important. Third, it

provides school staff with baseline data to measure long-term increases in support, monitor changes in image over time, and keep in touch with the opinions of key community groups.

The techniques for assessing a school's image are much the same as those used for conducting a needs assessment. The objectives should be clearly defined, written, and formally agreed upon. The research design should be realistic and achievable, involving decisions on whether data will be collected just from targeted groups or from a sampling of the entire community. The design should assure that the desired information be gathered in the most judicious, expedient, cost-effective, and reliable manner possible. This may involve a blending of qualitative and quantitative methods.

Assessing a school's image takes both resources and time, but schools that assess and monitor their images and, as a result, work to improve them, have several advantages over those that do not (Carroll and Carroll 1994):

- They are likely to be more effective in securing community support for school projects and changes.
- "Them vs. us" attitudes are minimized.
- Family support and involvement increases.
- Staff morale improves, since the staff feels it is part of a winning team.

Based on data from image assessment, a school can develop a plan to enhance positive factors and decrease the impact of negative ones. The planned actions and supporting data must be communicated to targeted groups.

MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS

A school's public relations strategies should include marketing communications—that is, communications directed at persuading the external public of the value of supporting public education in general and a specific school in particular. Marketing communications are tools used to persuade; their major purpose is to provide information to, and develop a relationship with, community groups.

There are three basic types of marketing communications: advertising, publicity, and personal contact. Advertising includes traditional methods—purchased time or space and outreach materials such as fact sheets, brochures, newsletters, and videotapes. Publicity includes newspaper and magazine articles, press releases, radio and television coverage, discussion panels, guest appearances, and other special efforts. Personal contact involves public speaking, special events, and tables or booths at community gatherings.

Carroll and Carroll (1994) suggest using a combination of advertising, publicity, and personal contact to get a school's message out to the community. They recommend eight strategies.

Strategy 1. Seize all opportunities that communicate quality to the community.

Quality is not a homogeneous concept; it may mean academics, job placement rate, literacy rate, before- and after-school programs, community service learning opportunities, etc. A public school needs to find out how quality is measured or judged by key community groups.

Strategy 2. Identify all community groups that should hear good news about the school.

Identify key community groups and use marketing communications tools targeted at specific groups to share good news and highlight quality.

Strategy 3. Use repetition to make the message memorable.

Delivering a message once is not enough.

Strategy 4. Name a public relations coordinator.

Although marketing is part of the whole school staff's job, the public relations coordinator has the major responsibility for overseeing a school's public relations plan. This individual is usually the one who works with the media and coordinates communications efforts. For large schools, the coordinator may be a full-time person; for smaller schools, the coordinator may be a part-time person or the assigned tasks may be the responsibility of a designated member of the school staff; for the smallest schools, the coordinator may be the principal or the superintendent.

Strategy 5. Develop a solid relationship with the media.

Work diligently to be accessible to the media and give them clear, consistent, and accurate information.

Strategy 6. Issue press releases and public service announcements (PSAs).

A press release is a concise, factual, non-promotional document that includes all the facts

(who, what, where, why, when, and how) about an event, program or happening that a publication or broadcast station needs to cover a story. PSAs are newsprint or broadcast announcements that are printed or aired free for nonprofit organizations. Radio PSAs are usually short written announcements read on the air by station personnel without sound effects or music.

Strategy 7. Build a collection of useful communication items, both in writing and in pictures.

The collection may be examples of good written communications, or communications written by the coordinator or other school personnel on specific programs and activities, or on public education in general. The collection may include letters to the editor, editorial columns, articles, op-ed pieces, newsletters, pictures with headlines that tell a story, etc.

Strategy 8. Develop your marketing communications with senior citizens in mind.

The support of senior citizens requires special cultivation in most communities because this growing group is often on fixed income and may have the perception that public education is of no personal benefit to them.

WORKING WITH THE NEWS MEDIA

Schools deal with two things very dear to most people: their children and their tax dollars. People want to know how well schools are teaching students, and they want to know how their tax dollars are being spent. In many communities, fewer than 25 percent of households have children in school. The other 75 percent probably rely heavily on the news media for information about schools. The 1998 PDK/Gallup Poll's identification of the media's negative impact on public confidence in public education underscores the importance of working with the media to ensure that attitudes toward schools are not based on misinformation or misunderstanding.

Working with the news media is only one part of a school's overall public relations plan, but it is such an important part that expending time and effort to do it well can pay big dividends. Not doing it well can have disastrous effects. Public confidence takes a long time to build but only a short time to destroy.

One of the facts that school leaders—both new and experienced—know is that, like it or not, they will have contact with the news media on a fairly regular basis. Still, as Mullen (1999) points out, many seem to have an inherent fear of the media, even though they know that working effectively with the media can make their jobs easier by accurately informing community members.

Working with the media involves a variety of encounters, from a full-scale news conference to a brief phone call. The contact may be initiated by either educators or reporters. Taking time to get acquainted, especially with the reporters who cover education, is important. Whether the contact centers on a crisis situation or on a routine story, it is always easier to work with someone you know and trust.

In an orientation guide for new school spokespersons, Mullen (1999) recommends that, in addition to taking time to know media personnel, the new spokesperson define three positive points facts, issues, or messages—he or she wants everyone to know about the school. If unsure of which messages to promote, the spokesperson should think of how the various issues of the day affect community members, identify school strengths and vulnerabilities and brainstorm with others, and keep asking "why," "so what," and "prove it" until three solid points are defined. Second, the spokesperson should anticipate a reporter's questions by making a list of questions that have been asked in the past or could be asked, including questions the person never wants to get. Then he or she should practice answering them, making sure to find a way back to the three positive points. And third, the spokesperson should personalize responses as much as possible, using "we" and "you," and keeping in mind the 10 C's of a good source: be concise, candid, conversational, clear, correct, calm, compassionate, compelling, complete, and credible.

In an American Association of School Administrators publication, *Working with the News Media*, Ordovensky and Marx (1993) give practical tips for working with print or broadcast media.

- *Give one person full responsibility for media relations.* Each school and school system should identify one person who will be the media liaison. The media relations director for a school system should :
  - Work directly with the superintendent.
  - Hold a position in the school system's cabinet

and be involved in and informed about the details of all programs and important decisions.
  - Have the authority to speak for the school system on any issue that might arise and to call on others for their knowledge and expertise in addressing various topics.
  - Not be chastised for reporting facts. (Some organizations are prone to shoot messengers rather than solve problems.)
- *Rule number one for all occasions: Whatever you say, be sure it's true.* Don't even think about obscuring the facts or saying things that are untrue.
- *Know your audience and address it.* Just as you would organize your presentation a bit differently for a PTA meeting, a chamber of commerce luncheon, or a school assembly, consider a reporter's audience when responding to a reporter's questions.
- *Remember that brevity is a virtue.* Since reporters are generally limited either by time or space, compose your comments in easy-to-understand, colorful segments. Beware of the temptation to make the same point over and over again.
- *Avoid education jargon.* Jargon exists in every field. It's a kind of shorthand that people use to communicate within a profession or line of work. If your audience isn't likely to understand a term, either don't use it or offer a brief, uncomplicated explanation.
- *Stick to the story.* If a reporter is visiting with you about a bond issue, site-based management, test scores in math, etc., avoid drifting into other subjects.
- *Don't blame reporters for things they can't control.* A reporter generally has little or no control over:
  - Whether the story will actually be used.
  - How the story is positioned and presented in relation to other stories.
  - The length of a story, either in print space or air time.
  - What is cut from the story to make it fit the required time and space.
  - The headline.
- *Know what is public information.* Reports and surveys financed by public dollars are public documents. A reporter can legitimately ask to see any such reports, and schools are required to provide them. Anything said at a public meeting, by any participant, can be publicly reported.
- *Remember, humans err.* Educators occasionally make mistakes. So do reporters. If an error appears in a story, resist the temptation to explode. The reporter may simply have misunderstood something you said. Keep in mind that good reporters base their livelihoods on their credibility. If they lose it, they are out of business.
- *Return calls promptly.* When reporters call, chances are they are working on a story for the next newspaper or newscast. Often, they must complete their stories within one or two days. Move a reporter's message to the top of your stack.
- *Know what "off-the-record" means.* Always assume that any conversation with a reporter is on-the-record and might be published. Reporters work on that assumption. So should you. On occasion, if you have a working relationship with a reporter and want to share unquotable information or background you can ask to go off-the-record for a minute. If the reporter agrees—and in most case he or she will—you can speak without fear of being quoted.
- *Think before you speak.* Try to select those words that will most precisely convey your ideas. If necessary, pause for a few seconds to form your answer. Always speak to those who may not have enough information to understand, and do so in clear, plain language.
- *Remember that "I don't know" is not a guilty plea.* If you don't know the answer to a question, don't try to make up something that could be inaccurate.
- *Remember that "no comment" is a comment.* In reality, these two words imply that the speaker has something to hide or is being condescending. Most reporters will assume both are true. Simply say you can't answer the question and why (e. g., "That's a personnel issue involving a school employee, and I don't think a public statement would be appropriate").
- *Be fair to all media.* You can go a long way toward building and maintaining credibility by adopting a policy of scrupulous fairness.
  - Distribute even the most routine news releases at the same time to all media outlets.
  - Don't deliberately, even inadvertently, time your news releases to give one news organization an advantage.
  - If you invite one news organization to cover an event, invite them all.

– If you expect both broadcast and print coverage at an event or news conference, allow adequate time.

- *Look for news pegs.* Know what aspect of a potential story will grab the reader's attention. Generally, some aspect of every story makes it topical or ties it to a community or worldwide concern. Schools are in an excellent position to work with various reporters on many beats. The entertainment reporter (school musical, dances, student art shows), business reporter (economics class), environmental reporter (science projects), and others might find special interest in various school activities. However, if a specific person has been assigned to cover education, make this reporter your first contact.
- *Be sensitive to deadlines.* Reporters are busiest each day during the two hours immediately preceding their deadlines. That's generally not a good time to call and chat unless you have information they need to complete a story.
- *Set up a good internal reporting system.* Many school systems distribute reporting forms to staff inviting them to submit possible story ideas. It's also a good idea to appoint a person in each school building to spot potential news stories. Every school district will benefit from efforts to help staff develop a "nose for news."
- *Never ask a reporter to show you a story before it is published.* The news media are free and independent, and a request to review a story before publication would probably be seen as an attempt to censor or change it.

Ordovensky and Marx conclude with a valuable reminder:

> Any organization that expects fair, balanced, accurate, interesting coverage by the media must be fair, balanced, accurate, and interesting with the media.... Both schools and the news media need to understand that occasional conflict is a fact of life. Mutually productive relationships should be sound enough to weather the storms of controversy.

KEY COMMUNICATORS

Many schools' public relations plans include a strategy for using another group of people besides news media personnel to bridge the gap between the school and the community. Often called "key communicators," they are supportive people—internal and external—who are kept well informed about the school. Their job is twofold: (1) to spread accurate and supportive information quickly to other members of the community; and (2) to be listening posts in the school and community, alerting school administration to rumors and concerns.

The people selected as key communicators are individuals who can be counted on to be supportive of the school and its successful operation, especially during times of stress. They should represent a cross section of the community. A key communicator can be almost anyone who is respected and listened to in his or her circle of contacts, regardless of the size of the circle. They might be business people, loyal volunteers, bus drivers, crossing guards, substitutes, parents of students and former students, former students themselves, interested senior citizens, etc.

To establish and maintain good communications with key communicators, school public relations personnel should:

- Identify people who share opinions with others about the school.
- Personally call each individual and invite him or her to become a key communicator. Invite all to come to *one* meeting, stressing that there will not be additional meetings. Briefly explain the concept of the program. Assure them that you are aware of their interest in the school and that you would like them to be a key communicator to receive information and share information—to be two-way communicators.
- Send interested individuals envelopes containing such items as school newsletters, a sample staff bulletin, a school calendar, etc.
- Ask these people to call you. Explain your need to know if something is occurring that affects the students or the school. Ask them to let you know if they hear something that sounds like a rumor. Promise that you, in turn, will keep them informed.
- Set up a way to quickly and efficiently contact your key communicators—a telephone chain, fax, or e-mail relay for quick response if the need arises, or pre-addressed envelopes for more detailed or less urgent communication. If an incident occurs at school, a simple letter of explanation sent to these people before the story reaches the newspapers or is exaggerated by the rumor mill will pay great dividends in credibility.
- Remember to say "thank you," both individually and to the group. At the end of the year,

invite the key communicators to school. Thank them for their interest and support. Perhaps give them a certificate, a small gift, or admission tickets to a school event.

TAKING ADVANTAGE OF TECHNOLOGY

While technology cannot replace face-to-face communication, word processing, e-mail, voice mail, faxing, videoconferencing, paging, chatting, surfing the Web, and CD-ROMs have become common tools for communicating ideas and accessing information. Bryan (1998) points out that educational technology is pervasive in both the administrative and instructional aspects of schools and encompasses both instructional design and delivery techniques.

Electronic communication provides 24-hour public access to school information and allows the school to communicate the same message in different languages. Homework hotlines and e-mail to and from teachers also make possible a kind of two-way communication not constrained by geography, time, or language barriers.

The Parent Institute (1999) reports that schools in about 25 states are now using TALK Systems to solve the growing problem of getting and keeping non-English speaking parents involved in their children's education. A lightweight, portable and wireless transmitting and receiving system allows voice interpretation in up to 10 languages to be transmitted to an unlimited number of listeners equipped with earphones. Thus, regardless of the primary speaker's language, interpreters may simultaneously transmit in different languages to different people in the same room. Two-way communication is possible because anyone in the audience can use an open microphone to ask questions, and the interpreter can translate the questions for all to hear. One benefit is that "the equipment has helped integrate parents of different cultures into a greater parent community... because TALK Systems allow the listener to sit anywhere in a room, parents need no longer be segregated into language groups. By being together and listening to each other's questions, they discover they all have similar concerns about their kids."

The TALK System is relatively inexpensive. The Parent Institute reports that, although the systems have been mainly used in "parent-teacher and parent education meetings, and with bilingual advisory committees,..[it is] also being used in parent-teacher conferences, school board meetings, field trips and in classrooms as an alternative to bilingual education." Teacher aides, volunteers, parents, and students typically serve as interpreters. Being an interpreter has the benefit of showing a student the value of being bilingual and the potential for using bilingualism in future careers.

A study for the Institute of Public Relations (1996) points out some of the uses of technology in the field of public relations.

> Properly used, the Web represents the ultimate communication tool for building relationships between an organization and its publics, both internal and external. The Web can deliver messages incorporating all modalities of human communication, whether text, audio, graphics, still pictures, animation or full-motion video. It can even deliver immersive virtual reality environment where organizations can demonstrate products or services, tours of offices and other facilities, or educational environments. More importantly, the Web offers interactivity and customization of information never before available to a large-scale audience or public.

The growth in local cable television has given rise to the production of a variety of local community-produced programs and provides yet another means of communicating with local audiences. Urging superintendents to be "electronic superintendents," Donlevy and others (1996) point out that local cable television can allow "an electronic superintendent' to reach community members in their homes at least as a supplement to standard communication channels such as newsletters and meetings, but possibly as a means to attract new attention and dialogue about school issues." They emphasize that not only can such a show enable the superintendent to communicate regularly with the various district audiences on items of concern to all stakeholders, but to do so at small cost to the district.

Technology is also being used in much broader ways to create "virtual schools." In one project, part of a National Science Foundation initiative, the College of Human Relations and Education and the Computer Science Department at Virginia

Tech University in Blacksburg, Virginia, are working with county schools to develop a network-based virtual school (Parson 1999). What is being developed is "an unbounded educational environment with no walls, no halls, no bells, where virtual collaborative classrooms encompass the entire community and exploit connections among diverse educational resources—schools, libraries, homes, businesses, government, local and global networks, and individuals."

Technology is also being used to link Blacksburg residents into what is being called an "electronic village." The idea is to link community members to each other, to information sources, and to worldwide networks. The Blacksburg Electronic Village (www.bev.net) is an example of a collaborative venture involving the town government, Virginia Tech University, and the regional telephone company.

GETTING A PUBLIC RELATIONS PROGRAM UNDERWAY

The process for developing a comprehensive school public relations program is similar to the process used in the development of any strategic plan. It should:

- Be strategic in that it contributes to the school's and school district's mission and overall objectives.
- "Market" the school and the district and their educational values as well as the programs, facilities, and services.
- Focus on both internal and external publics, especially targeting those stakeholders with whom public relations need to be improved.
- Be part of a school- and district-wide effort that supports and is supported by other organizational functions (i.e., operation, programming, home-school-community outreach efforts).
- Recognize that the success of public relations—and ultimately the entire home-school-community involvement initiative—depends on the quality and strength of the relationship with all the community's educational stakeholders, with an emphasis on long-term satisfaction.
- Be viewed, budgeted, and evaluated as an investment, not as an expense.

A detailed public relations plan should have eight integrated components: the organization's mission, goals, and objectives; a needs/situation assessment; PR objectives; internal and external populations segmentation, targeting, and positioning; the mix of strategies; budget; implementation plan; and evaluation. The National School Public Relations Association and the National School Boards Association can supply reference materials and written examples. Most larger school systems are willing to share their plans and offer assistance to smaller districts. The school or school district may also want to use an advisory committee representing educators, students, families, businesses, and community members in all their diversity.

STAFFING THE PROGRAM

School public relations personnel perform several functions (National School Public Relations Association 1999):

- *Communication with internal and external publics.* Handle all aspects of the school's or district's publications such as its external newspaper and internal newsletter.
- *Media relations.* Serve as media liaison. Write news releases for local newspapers/TV/radio; work to get media coverage of education news.
- *Budget/bond issue campaigns.* Stay closely informed about the entire budget-making process and promote community input. Develop budget/bond issue campaigns and publications.
- *Communications planning/crisis communications planning.* Develop a communications plan, detailing how to reach internal and external publics; develop a crisis communication plan for reaching publics, gathering facts, and dealing with media.
- *Public relations research, surveys, polls, informal research.* Conduct formal and informal research to determine public opinion and attitudes as a basis for planning and action.
- *School/district imaging and marketing.* Promote the school's/district's strengths, achievements, and solutions to problems.
- *Student/staff recognition.* Vigorously publicize student and staff achievement; develop staff and retirement recognition programs.
- *Information station.* Answer public and new resident requests for information, maintain extensive background files, keep historical and budget records; plan for school/district anniversary celebrations.

- *Public relations training.* Provide public relations training to staff and other school-related groups (school advisory council, PTA, etc.) in areas such as talking to the media, communicating in a crisis, and recognizing non-teaching staff as part of the school PR team.
- *Community relations liaison.* Serve as liaison with community groups such as civic associations and service clubs; help plan/publicize school's/district's parent, senior citizen, and community service programs. Develop ways to bring the community into the school.
- *The "I's."* Help keep both "I's" of the school/district open by working to keep the public Informed and Involved in the schools.
- *Public relations counsel.* Provide public relations counsel, taking a proactive stance; anticipate problems and provide solutions.

Public relations personnel need a number of "operational capabilities" (*Training Educational Communication-School PR Specialists* 1997) to be effective:

- Thorough understanding of educational services, objectives, processes, and potentials. Ability to identify relationships between education and other human needs and wants. Comprehension of social conditions and trends.
- Familiarity with political structures and decision-making processes.
- Comprehension of ethical public relations operations.
- Understanding of how people respond to communication messages. Knowledge of how people change their opinions and attitudes.
- Awareness of how perception affects acceptance or rejection of new facts and ideas.
- Comprehension of the function of reward and threat in message content.
- Awareness of the nature of rumor.
- Ability to work cooperatively with teachers, education leaders, community leaders, media personnel, and other influential members of the community.
- Knowledge of how leadership can be developed in others.
- Comprehension of how civic and advisory groups can be used effectively.
- Understanding of how the media functions.
- Ability to compose messages to attract attention, arouse interest, and evoke action.

In spite of compelling evidence of the importance of public relations, Kowalski and Wiedmer (1995) found that probably no more than 20 percent of school boards have adopted a public relations policy *and* employed a full- or part-time PR person. Budget constraints may be cited as a reason for not having a public relations program and a person designated to carry it out, but the real reason is more likely that, despite the evidence, public relations is not viewed as a priority.

When public relations is a priority, creative resource allocation and staffing can usually be formulated. In larger districts, it is not difficult to justify the hiring of at least a part-time public relations coordinator with an adequate operations budget. In smaller districts or at the local school level, the superintendent or principal will have to personally perform many of the PR tasks, especially those needed on a regular basis. However, even in these cases, it is usually possible for the superintendent or principal to designate several people—from staff or the community—to be responsible for certain aspects of the plan. For example, the various tasks of a comprehensive public relations plan could be divided so that a staff member is given time to write a newsletter and news releases. Trained volunteers could be used to conduct surveys and publicize student and staff achievements. Students can be trained to research community opinions and attitudes. As Litrenta (1999) points out, students gain valuable experiences in data collection and analysis and are an efficient, time-saving, and cost-effective way for a public relations coordinator to acquire valid data.

STEPPING FORWARD

Houston and Bryant (1997) note that school public relations are improving. Schools are becoming "aware of the mixed message they often send to the public. We welcome them into the school on one hand and wave them away with the other. We say we want them involved in their schools, and we create all these mechanisms that hold them at arm's length." But more school officials are now attempting to reach across the gulf that separates schools from the public they serve.

Bob Chase, president of the National Education Association (*Stepping Forward* 1999), quotes a bumper sticker that says, "Change is good. You go first." Noting our natural human ambivalence about change, he observes that some schools and

school districts are daring to go first with new ideas and initiatives to revitalize public schools. Many of these schools are reaching out to parents, social service agencies, businesses, and the public in general to build broad support for learning. Central to their public relations efforts is the concept of keeping the "public" in public education and involving the community in raising the child. A variety of public relations efforts are starting to bridge the gap that separates schools from communities.

One technique—initiating conversations with the public—is gaining popularity. Schools are using town meetings and community forums as a means to take the public's pulse on education issues. Some are patterning local forums on forums sponsored by Phi Delta Kappa in cooperation with the Center for Education Policy and the National PTA. These forums are structured around three fundamental questions: (1) What are the purposes of the public schools? (2) How effective are the public schools in achieving those purposes? and (3) What changes are necessary to make the public schools as effective as we want them to be? (Rose and Rapp 1997)

Education leaders—school boards, superintendents, and principals—should raise these questions in their communities at every opportunity. How they analyze and deal with the answers they receive will determine, collectively across America, if the gap between those who operate public schools and their publics will be bridged.

REFERENCES

American Association of School Administrators. 1993. *How Our Investment in Education Pays Off.* Arlington, VA.

Bagin, D., Gallagher, D., and Kindred, L. 1994. *The School and Community Relations.* Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Bryan, V. C. 1998. "Technology and Education: Leadership Issues," in *School Administration: Knowledge Constructions and Theory.* A. C. Jurenas, ed. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt.

Carroll, S. R., and Carroll, D. 1994. *How Smart Schools Get and Keep Community Support.* Bloomington, IN: National Educational Service.

Clark, D. 1999. Big Dog's *Leadership Page—Communication.* www.nwlind.com/~donclark/leader/leadcom/.

Decker, L. E., and Associates. 1994. *Home-School-Community Relations: Trainers Manual and Study Guide.* Charlottesville, VA: Mid-Atlantic Center for Community Education.

Donlevy, J. G.; Hilliard, A.; and Donley, T. R. 1996. "The Electronic Superintendent," *Journal of Educational Public Relations,* 17, 1 (February).

Houston, P., and Bryant, A. 1997. "The Role of Superintendents and School Boards in Engaging the Public with the Public School," *Phi Delta Kappan,* 78, 10 (June).

Institute for Public Relations. 1996. *A Report on the Issues Facing Communications Professionals, Executive Summary.* www.instituteforpr.com/projects2.

Kowalski, T. J., and Wiedmer, T. 1995. "Most Superintendents Appear to be PR Passive," *Journal of Educational Public Relations,* 16, 1 (January).

Litrenta, L. E. 1999. "PR Directors Can Benefit from Student Researchers," *Journal of Educational Relations,* 20, 2 (2nd Quarter).

Martinson, D. 1995. "School Public Relations: Do It Right or Don't Do It at All," *Journal of Educational Relations,* 16, 3 (July).

Mullen, M. 1999. "How to Work with Media Reporters," *Journal of Educational Relations,* 20, 3 (3rd Quarter).

National Education Association. 1999. *Building Partnerships for Student Learning: A Pocket Guide.* www.nea.org/partners/pocket.html/.

National Education Association. 1999. *Stepping Forward.* www.nea.org/newunion/stepfwd/.

National School Public Relations Association.1999. *Why You Need a School PR Practitioner Now More Than Ever.* www.nspra.org/main_schoolpr/.

Norton, M. S. 1998. "School Climate Has a Major Impact on School Improvement," *Journal of Educational Public Relations,* 19, 4 (4th Quarter).

Ordovensky, P., and Marx, G. 1993. *Working with the News Media.* Arlington, VA: American Association of School Administrators.

Parson, S. R. 1999. *Transforming Schools into Community Learning Centers.* Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education, Inc.

Phi Delta Kappa International. 1999. *International Fast Facts About PDK/Gallup Poll 9/98.* www.pdkintl.org/whatis/ff4poll.htm.

Rose, L., and Rapp, D. 1997. "The Future of the Public Schools: A Public Discussion," *Phi Delta Kappan,* 78, 10 (June).

The Parent Institute. 1999. "Break Down the Language Barrier to Parent Involvement," in *What's Working in Parent Involvement* (January).

"Training Educational Communication-School PR Specialists." 1997. *Journal of Educational Public Relations,* 18, 1 (1st Quarter).

Yantis, J. 1995. "Community Relations Start with the Internal School Climate," *Journal of Educational Relations,* 16, 3 (July).

WEBSITES

A-Plus Communications
www.apluscommunications.com
Institute for Public Relations
www.instituteforpr.com
National School Public Relations Association
www.nspra.org
Public Relations Society of America
www.prsa.org

CHAPTER VII
DEALING WITH POLITICAL REALITIES

Educators have long been advised to stay out of politics: "Education is for children.... It is too important and sacred a societal function to be mixed up in politics.... Educators should maintain a position untainted by the political battles that occur in the community and consciously seek to ensure that the school will be unscarred by those battles" (Blumberg 1985). But Berg and Hall (1990) recommend a more realistic approach.

> The strong taboo against educators indulging in the business of politics is strongly rooted in the profession and continues to be espoused. For example, the President of the United States, in his 1997 State of the Union Address, strongly admonished Congress and the American public that politics must stop at the school house door.'... The aversion among educators to the reality of political activities in the achievement of educational goals is widespread. For those of us who work with present and future educational leaders, it is imperative that a more realistic stance be established.... In short [quoting Carter and Cunningham 1997], if the administrator does not become one of the political players, he or she will be dominated by others, powerless and at the mercy of the political system.'

Today, no one seriously disputes the proposition that politics plays a significant role in decisions about schools and educational practices. Schools and educators have been cast as saviors or scapegoats: they are expected to remediate society's social and economic ills, but if their attempted reforms fail to produce quick fixes, critics make scapegoats of their visible leadership. Jerome Murphy (Decker and Associates 1994), dean of the Harvard Graduate School of Education, says the truth of this point is borne out by the fact that the average tenure of big-city school superintendents is less than three years.

Many people in the community have a stake in education—even if they see it only as an expenditure of their tax dollars—so it is not surprising that they want a voice in the ongoing debate about schools. Even in communities that have a commitment to equal opportunity for all children, actuating that commitment almost inevitably involves money—public money—for such things as early childhood education, smaller classes, expanded technology, more comprehensive social services, etc. And any decisions about the expenditure of public money involves politics and the community power structure.

Educators need to understand political power—where it comes from and how it can be used to improve schools—but many educators resist political engagement.

> Overtly political efforts to move an agenda forward, build coalitions of support and, when needed, force concessions which encourage broad-based community involvement are more and more the standard than the exception. Still, political engagement remains, in many administrators' thinking, an intrusion in the business of schooling. Much remains to be done to move these educational leaders away from thinking that the nobility of their mission guarantees public support.... Recognition that confidence in the schools comes as much from influential individual and political support as it does from student outcomes is a concept many educators only grudgingly accept, if at all. (Berg and Hall 1999)

POLITICS

Education is political because school administrators have authority over the allocation of public resources, and because the public expects schools to transmit values. Education is both the *object* of political activity by influences outside the school and the *subject* of political activity because its practitioners can shape policies and behaviors within the school system.

As Cortes (1993) explains, politics is about collective action initiated by people, "about relationships enabling people to disagree, argue, interrupt one another, clarify, confront, and negotiate, and through this process of debate and conversation to form a compromise and a consensus that enables them to act." It is this process that enables people to change the nature of schools—or any other institution—recreating and reorganizing the way in which people, networks, and institutions operate.

If the process of debate and conversation is to lead to consensus, people must be given the opportunity to develop practical wisdom and the kind of judgment that includes understanding and responsibility. Cortes argues, "[I]n politics, it is not enough to be right, that is, it is not enough to have a position that is logically worked out; one also has to be reasonable, that is, one has to be willing to make concessions and exercise judgment in forging a deal." Understood in this sense, decisions made by voting are "not to discover what people want, but to ratify decisions and actions the political community has reached through argumentative deliberations."

Public Life Project, sponsored by the Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota, is based on the conviction that the politics of serious democracy is the give-and-take, messy, everyday work of citizens themselves. Politics is the way citizens deal with public problems—the issues of their common existence—in many settings, not simply through government. It is the way people *become* citizens—accountable players and contributors.

This kind of "citizen politics" should play a role in each of the following traditional modes of political problem solving (Project Public Life 1992):

- *Institutional politics*. Examples: Congress, schools, boards. The strengths of institutional politics are that it has broad-scale effect, that mechanisms and processes are in place, and that there is accountability through voting. The barriers are that it lacks active citizen involvement, that experts own the knowledge, and that power is fragmented in a hierarchical system. Using citizen politics reclaims the public mission and organizes leadership that represents the hierarchy, working laterally as well as hierarchically.
- *Community politics*. Examples: neighborhood crime watch, groups organized to rehabilitate local parks. The strengths are that it draws on diversity to solve problems and demonstrates citizen leadership. The barriers are that it takes time and is limited in scale. Using citizen politics expands the role of neighbor to citizen and brings local lessons to larger audiences/arenas.
- *Helping politics*. Examples: soup kitchens, Adopt-a-Grandparent, Big Brother/Sister. The strengths are that it connects individuals, educates participants, and provides immediate assistance. The barriers are that it risks becoming a professional service, cannot solve problems on a larger scale, and does not examine the policy behind the need. Using citizen politics explores self-interests and roles, and understands the nature of building diverse public relationships.
- *Protest politics*. Examples: marches, demonstrations, boycotts. The strengths are that it is a successful organizing tool, increases a feeling of community and shared concerns, and brings attention to an issue. The barriers are that it is a reaction that rarely sets an agenda, is difficult to sustain, and sets up enemies and innocents. Using citizen politics builds public mission, identifies diverse self-interests, understands power as relational, and creates public spaces for problem solving.

These modes of public problem solving are not isolated from one another. Each is related to the other, either as a result of, or in response to, inadequacies of any one political mode for solving large, complex problems. Project Public Life proponents contend that by making each type of politics more public—more open, diverse, participatory, democratic—the practice of public problem solving is enhanced.

POWER

Understanding politics requires an understanding of power, because both power and politics are involved in the allocation of resources for the "public good."

Two kinds of power—unilateral and relational—exist in communities (Cortes 1993). Unilateral power treats the opposition as an object to be instructed and directed; it tends to be coercive and domineering. Relational power involves a personal relationship, subject to subject. This kind of power involves, not just the capacity to act, but the capacity to allow oneself to be acted upon; a kind of empathy permits a meaningful understanding of other people's subjects and allows them to understand yours.

Understanding politics also requires an understanding of the relationship between leadership and power. The Center for Leadership Studies (1988) points out:

> Only an empowered leader can successfully direct followers. Power is the resource that

enables a leader to influence followers. Given this integral relationship between leadership and power, leaders must not only assess their leadership behavior in order to understand how they actually influence other people; they also must examine their possession and use of power. ...Inappropriate use of power, or inappropriate use of certain power bases will ultimately undermine a leader's credibility.

Hersey and others (1979) identified seven bases of power:

- *Legitimate power* is based on the position of the leader. A leader high in legitimate power influences others because they believe that he or she has the right, by virtue of position, to expect suggestions to be followed.
- *Information power* is based on the leader's access to information that is perceived as valuable to others. This power base influences others because they need the information or want to be "in on things."
- *Expert power* is based on the leader's possession of expertise, skill, and knowledge. A leader high in expert power is seen as possessing the expertise to facilitate the work of others, and respect for this expertise leads to compliance.
- *Reward power* is based on the leader's ability to reward other people. They believe that their compliance will lead to rewards such as increased pay, promotion, or recognition.
- *Referent power* is based on the leader's personal traits. A liking for, admiration of, and identification with the leader influences others.
- *Connection power* is based on the leader's "connections" with influential or important persons inside or outside the organization. A leader high in connection power induces compliance from others because they aim at gaining the favor or avoiding the disfavor of the powerful connection.
- *Coercive power* is based on fear. It induces compliance because failure to comply is seen as leading to punishment, such as undesirable assignments, reprimands, or even dismissal.

The power structure of a community refers to the formal and informal networks that make things happen. Power is structured differently in different communities, and power structures change over time. Relational power comes into play when two or more people, groups, organizations, or agencies come together, argue their concerns, develop a plan, and take some sort of action. In citizen politics, the challenge is for people to get enough power to do the things they think are important. Gaining enough power usually involves building coalitions with other people and learning the rules of politics and power. One lesson is clear: effective political leaders learn from and are influenced by a community of collaborators and supporters. Effective leadership is both informed and collegial, and power and politics are intertwined.

POLICY MAKING

In a generic sense, a policy is a broad guideline describing a course of action approved by a governing entity in a given situation. Policy making is the process by which a course of action is determined, worded, executed, and interpreted; it functions as a sorting-out process for the aspirations, needs, and concerns of the individuals and groups involved. Policy is an outcome of this process.

Policy making is a special type of decision making that takes place in a political context. The focus is on the policy makers and the processes they establish to control access to the development of policies. Education policy makers are influenced by the representational and distributive nature of educational policy, and the ongoing nature of the decision-making process. The participants and their orientations are basic factors in the policy-making process. As interests and values change, policy priorities also change.

Policy making serves both problem-solving and power-balancing goals (Pisapia 2000). In problem solving, policies are adopted to help the organization pursue its goals more efficiently through technical processes. The resulting policies describe the extent to which the governing body intends to solve the problem, how it intends to solve it, the activities required to solve it, and the resources to be allocated. In power balancing, policy makers engage in a set of interactions they hope will shape the authoritative allocation of values. The policies developed represent an equilibrium: the balance of power among the various governing bodies, individuals, and groups charged with governing education, or with an interest in the decisions. In its power-balancing aspects, policy making is a political process designed to allocate money, jobs, prestige or status, and primary responsibility.

Policies tend to follow from political interaction and a complex set of forces that together produce effects. To understand who or what makes policy, one must understand the characteristics of the participants, what roles they play, what authority they hold, and how they deal with and control each other. Lindblom (1993) makes an important distinction between policy making and problem solving. Policies tend to follow from political interaction rather than from rational analysis, while conventionally conceived problem solving is an intellectual process.

In the U. S., policies regarding the allocation and use of resources result primarily from political interaction that blends the values and definitions of the "public good" of three political subcultures. These subcultures may exist side by side or even overlap; differences in their cultural values significantly affect local and state educational systems. These subcultures are (Thompson 1976):

- *Individualistic.* In this culture, government is viewed simply as a utilitarian institution created to handle those functions that cannot be managed by individuals. Government need not have any direct concern with the question of the "good society" or the "general welfare." The democratic order is viewed as a marketplace. Emphasis is on private concerns, and a high value is placed on limiting community intervention into private activities. Government exists only to "give the public what it wants," and public officials are normally unwilling to initiate on their own new programs or open new areas of governmental activity.
- *Moralistic.* This culture emphasizes that politics is part of the people's search for the "good society," and that the "good life" can be achieved only through the good society. Individualism in this view is tempered by a general commitment to use communal power to intervene in public activities when it is necessary to do so for the public good. Participation in community affairs is seen as a civic duty for every citizen, and public officials are viewed as having a moral obligation to promote the general welfare even at the expense of individual loyalties and political friendships.
- *Traditionalistic.* This culture views the main role of government as the maintenance of the existing social order. It accepts government as a positive factor in the affairs of the community—but only to the extent that government legitimizes and encourages the traditional values and patterns of life. Social and family ties are paramount, and real political power is confined to a relatively small and self-perpetuating group drawn from an established elite of "good old families."

In addition to its political subcultures, every community has interest groups. The most common political tactics of interest groups are public relations—trying to create a favorable climate; electioneering—trying to elect individuals who are sympathetic; and lobbying—trying to influence decisions.

Four kinds of interest groups account for most of the influence on state and local governments:

- *Economically motivated groups.* Government policies will either cost or save members money. Business and labor are the most obvious examples.
- *Professionally motivated groups.* Government policies may affect their members' professional activities. Medical and teacher associations are examples.
- *Public agency groups.* These groups provide opportunities for public officials to exchange ideas, lobby collectively, and get up-to-date information on developments and concepts that affect their own agencies. Examples are the U.S. Conference of Mayors and the National Association of Counties.
- *Ideological groups.* Most of these groups claim to represent a public interest. Many are not permanent but arise in response to a specific issue. Environmental and religious groups are examples.

There are other groups, often not readily identifiable, that affect the political interaction of a community. Some may not be well informed about what is happening in local schools, may not understand the theory and practices behind educational jargon, or may feel excluded from serious discussion about school matters. Individuals in these groups are often targeted by opponents of various school initiatives and may receive biased information in order to enlist their support in opposition.

DISCOVERING THE COMMUNITY POWER STRUCTURE

An important first step for anyone who wants to make changes in schools or educational programs is to identify the leaders in the community's power structure. It is only then that appropriate communication linkages can be built, involvement strategies designed, and alternative plans developed. There are four basic ways to identify the power actors in a community (Hiemstra 1993):

- *Positional* method—identifying the individuals who occupy key authority positions, usually formal roles, in the community's major organizations, groups, and strata. An important basic assumption is that power and decision-making ability reside in those who hold important positions in a community's formal organizations.
- *Reputational* method—identifying knowledgeable citizens who can provide the names of top community power actors according to their reputations for social power. The basic premise is that a reputation for having the potential to affect community decisions is an accurate index of influence, and that such reputations are slow to change.
- *Decision-making* method—tracing the history of decision-making in a particular issue area. Influential people are those who can be identified as the main participants in any such activity. A basic assumption is that the social power to influence decisions within a community can be measured by a person's actual participation in various problem-solving or decision-making activities.
- *Social participation* method—making lists of the formal leaders of a variety of voluntary associations. The assumption is that social participation, active membership, and holding a leadership role are important prerequisites to the accumulation and use of community influence.

Hiemstra explains why it may be necessary to use more than one method to arrive at an accurate picture of a community's leadership:

> In reality, each method may identify different power actors and leaders within a community. At times, the overlap of individuals determined by the various methods will be fairly small. The positional method yields institutional leaders, office holders, and highly visible leaders; the reputational technique identifies reputed leaders, generalized leaders, and frequently, non-visible leaders; the decision-making method can delineate both generalized and specialized activists; and the social participation method often identifies primarily "doers," those in the public eye, and voluntary association leaders. Thus it may be necessary for the educational change agent to employ more than one technique to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the community's leadership.... [Moreover,] actors will change over time. Consequently, any one method may need to be repeated periodically so that such changes can be determined.

NEEDED POLITICAL SKILLS

Bolman and Deal (1991) propose conceptualizing school organizations through a political frame of reference—a setting in which different interest groups compete for power and scarce resources. In their view, schools are "alive and screaming political arenas that house a complex variety of individual and group interests." The potential for conflict is everywhere because of the differences in needs, perspectives, and lifestyles among the various individuals and groups. Bolman and Deal see bargaining, negotiation, coercion, and compromise as part of everyday organizational life. They suggest that the following political skills are essential for school leaders:

- *Agenda setting*, the ability to establish both a purpose for the organization and a coherent strategy for achieving that purpose.
- *Networking and coalition building*, the ability to build personal relationships with members of the school community who can help neutralize potential opposition to the agenda and become allies in striving to achieve it.
- *Negotiating and bargaining*, the ability to manage the constant clash of different interests in the organization.

Still, these skills alone will not make a successful school politician, according to Bolman and Deal. Attitudes must change, and school leaders must "understand that politics are not something external to the school organization, or an unpleasant peripheral duty. Rather, politics must be understood as part of the very life blood of the organization and political skills seen as the tools through which the administrator achieves his or her major goal, the education of children."

FINDING COMMON GROUND

Educators, faced with concerns, criticism, and challenges from their communities, often respond with anger and defensiveness. Vondra (1996) points out, "[I]n some cases the name calling and behaviors have become strident enough to erode trust among people inside and outside of education on various sides of the issues. When voices become hostile, the school atmosphere can feel more like a war than a discussion on how to ensure a good education for students." Reaching consensus on how education can best serve students is not only necessary to resolve differences, but is in the best interests of everyone in the community.

The process for seeking common ground relies on many of the same techniques used to build communities and allocate social capital. In this case, a school's "social capital" is the attention and resources it gets from responsible adults in the community. Cortes (1993) notes that thinking about relationships as "capital" helps put decisions about the allocation of resources into a helpful perspective.

> To create capital, individuals must invest labor, energy, and effort in the here-and-now to create something for later use.... Investment requires the ability and the discipline to defer gratification, to invest energy not only in the needs or pleasures of the present, but also in the potential demands of the future. Capital also requires maintenance and renewal.... Knowledge and skills must be updated and refined. Similarly, the partners in a venture must renew the means of trusting one another.

Almost all educational advocates acknowledge the difficulty in finding common ground. Although most Americans want decisive action to improve schools, they disagree about both the problems and the solutions. Public support is up for grabs, and advocates of none of the contending perspectives can confidently count the public on their side.

STRATEGIES FOR ACHIEVING CHANGE

Achieving educational change in policies and practices almost certainly requires efforts by a variety of people, probably in more than one organization. For this reason, no single approach is likely to accomplish all of the goals and objectives. Hiemstra (1993) describes four basic strategies for achieving change and notes that unless the desired change is simple—and already has wide acceptance—a combination of strategies will be needed.

- *Learn who the primary community leaders are, understand how they control or affect the decision-making process, and establish an acquaintanceship or friendship with them.* Those who propose or plan change need to involve or consult such influential persons at various stages of the planning process. If such involvement is not facilitated, the planner risks program blockage or failure.
- *Identify with and use existing groups and organizations that will support the desired change.* This approach involves the coordination of two or more groups; a professional planner or other expert is frequently needed to promote this cooperation.
- *Affiliate with an organization whose function can include directing or guiding the change.* Because such organizations often perform a change-agent role, their employees are knowledgeable about the means used to achieve various changes and have skills in human relations, problem diagnosis, and use of resources to achieve specific goals.
- *Form committees or groups around particular content areas or particular needs.* This involves getting agencies or organizations with certain physical and organizational resources to cooperate with groups that have special skills or access to particular clients. This strategy is especially useful in addressing unique minority-group needs.

Many schools and school systems already have in place one vehicle for facilitating change—the school/community advisory council. Over the years, these councils have often functioned as advisory bodies in the development of educational policy.

COMMUNICATIONS

Finding common ground depends on several factors, but effective communication skills and processes are the key. Ledell (1995) says that

finding common ground begins when everyone who has concerns and ideas about education—superintendents, administrators, teachers, community members, students, civic and community leaders—understands and practices certain basic strategies. Communication skills and methods are implicit in each.

- Listen in a variety of ways and in many places to a wide cross section of people, including those who disagree.
- Anticipate issues and separate them from personalities.
- Set up formal processes to monitor, measure, and disseminate the results of decisions made by boards of education, school committees, community advocacy groups, etc.
- Create relationships built on trust and confidence, and on processes designed to achieve efficiency, openness, and accountability.
- Acknowledge and support the proposition that all decisions and actions must be able to withstand public scrutiny, discussion, and debate.

The importance of effective communication was also emphasized by the report of the Millennium Communications Group (1999), commissioned by the Rockefeller Foundation. The report was part of the Foundation's effort to revitalize citizenship at the local level by bringing collaborative problem-solving and conflict-resolution techniques to diverse groups of community stakeholders. Entitled *Communications as Engagement*, the report states that "actors need messages that will allow them to speak most powerfully to the aspirations and commitment of those who are already engaged...to enlarge the pool of those who are engaged, and to build a sense of momentum and forward progress among the population as a whole." The report recommends that the messages incorporate several themes:

- Drawing people into a process of involvement, engagement, and learning.
- Communicating diversity as an advantage, not a threat.
- Expanding understanding of the complex and interrelated nature of the problems faced.
- Demonstrating that the proposed initiative is a quality of life movement for everyone, not just an add-on.
- Repositioning the word "public" as describing that which belongs to all the people—to "us," not to an agency or to "them."
- Creating a sense of accomplishment, momentum, and "can do" from the success stories that already exist.
- Creating and projecting a sense of the whole—wholeness incorporating diversity.

DEALING WITH CRITICISM

One of the political realities that educators must accept is that they will always have critics—in all shapes and sizes, with a variety of attitudes and motives. There are hostile critics, uninformed critics, professional critics, enlightened critics, and pressure groups.

Marx (1993) suggests these basic steps in dealing with criticism:

- Listen closely to what the critic has to say. Your major goal should *be mutual understanding*, not necessarily converting the critic to your point of view.
- Ask questions. Try to gain insight into the motivation behind the criticism. Get to know your critic.
- Keep in mind that some people just feel a need to complain but don't want to discuss the issue in depth.
- Avoid defensiveness, which often implies some kind of guilt. Maintain the offensive without *being* offensive. Always be open and honest.
- Try to reach some form of understanding. It is not necessary to be passive. Explain the school's role. Indicate that you want to reach an understanding and maintain contact. Invite the person back for a second visit if necessary and make arrangements for a follow-up call.

Marx emphasizes that critics should be dealt with individually if possible, not at public meetings. Use the following techniques for responding to criticism:

- Be aware of the cultural and intellectual background of your critic. Don't over- or underestimate his or her intellectual background.
- Evaluate the emotional climate. Some hostile critics want to release tension more than they want to obtain an answer.
- Find out something about the person's interests and needs. Relate your comments to ideas or organizations the person deals with or understands.
- Give simple answers to the questions posed. Avoid long answers that can destroy interest and create more hostility. Don't dwell on the history or background of problems unless asked to do so. Avoid side issues and exceptions.

- Speak in concrete terms—not theoretically—and avoid professional jargon. Include illustrations and examples.

WHEN THINGS GET OUT OF HAND

Sometimes, no matter how hard school personnel try, an atmosphere of skepticism degenerates into alienation and organized opposition. If this happens, Ledell and Arnsparger (1993) recommend using the following guidelines to get through the crisis and back to the basic communication strategy:

- Make sure you are clear about the issues. Don't respond to rumor or personal opinion. Gather available facts and materials being circulated by critics.
- Don't overreact. Take time to review the available information. You may find that you can end the controversy by having a conversation with the individuals involved.
- Select in advance those who will be the spokespersons if things get out of hand. These individuals should handle all inquiries from the media, families, and others in the community. The school and district should respond with one voice.
- Brief the entire staff. No one who works in the school or district should have to guess what is going on. Tell them what has occurred, what steps are being taken, who the spokespersons are, and how they can help. Ask them to refer inquiries about the situation to one of the designated spokespersons.
- Prepare a written statement that can be given to people who ask for the school's response. It should answer most people's immediate questions.
- Provide an open forum at which the issues can be discussed and all points of view expressed.
- Invite the media and others into the school. Provide written information and a "road map," so they know what they are seeing.
- Don't be defensive. Respond freely and offer information to those requesting it. Be honest.
- Don't stonewall. Speak positively and enthusiastically about what the school and district are doing.
- Don't allow yourself to be insulted. You do not have a responsibility to respond to outrageous accusations or personal insults. When someone is in an irrational, aggressive frame of mind, keep your emotions under control. Don't accuse the critic of being irrational or out of control; tactfully suggest scheduling another time to talk.
- If personal safety becomes an issue, call the police immediately. Don't attempt to handle potential violence on your own.

POLITICS AND ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Politics are a fact of life in public schools because many people in the community have a stake in public education. Educators must understand and use politics and the community power structure to help them achieve their mission of academic success for all children. They must both master basic political skills and adopt an attitude that values politics as an honorable means of achieving educational goals. They have an obligation to engage and inform the public, and to protect schools from manipulation by special-interest groups who seek to misinform the public in order to advance their own agenda.

The fact is that issues related to home-school-community relations have entered into the arena of political policy and action. As a result, simplified answers are sometimes offered to complex questions of responsibility, choice, control, and blame. Even some of those who advocate sharing power with families and communities may at times be motived by their own educational and social objectives (Beresford 1992).

Whether overt opposition exists or not, educators must develop ways to communicate, through a democratic process, with a wide variety of people in the community. Without public understanding, support, and participation, initiatives to achieve the academic success of all children will be difficult, if not impossible, to sustain. Indeed, the greatest benefit of the involvement process may be that members of the community will learn to work together to improve learning for all children.

REFERENCES

Beresford, E. 1992. "The Politics of Parental Involvement," in *Education and Community: The Politics of Practice*. G. Allen and I. Martin, eds. London: Cassell.

Berg, J. H., and Hall, G. E. 1989. "The Intersection of Political Leadership and Educational Excellence: A Neglected Leadership Domain," *AASA Professor*, 22, 4 (Summer).

Bolman, L. G., and Deal, T. E. 1991. *Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice and Leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Center for Leadership Studies. 1989. *Power PerceptionProfile*. www.situational.com/res/res_tp

Cortes, E., Jr. 1993. "Reweaving the Fabric: The Iron Rule and the IAF Strategy for Power and Politics," in *Interwoven Destinies: Cities and the Nation*. H. G. Cisneros, ed. New York: W.W.Norton&Company. www.cpn.org/sections/topics/commu...civic-perspectivs/cortes-reweaving.

Decker, L. E., and Associates. 1994. *Home-School-Community Relations Manual*. Charlottesville, VA: Mid-Atlantic Center for Community Education.

Hiemstra, R. 1993. *The Educative Community: Linking the Community, Education, and Family*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Adult Education Publications. www-distance.syr.edu.

Hersey, P.; Blanchard, K. H.; and Natemeyer, W. E. 1979. *Situational Leadership, Perception, and the Power to Impact*. Escondido, CA: Center for Leadership Studies.

Ledell, M. 1995. *How to Avoid Crossfire and Seek Common Ground*. Arlington, VA: American Association of School Administrators.

Ledell, M., and Arnsparger, A. 1993. *How to Deal with Community Criticism of School Change*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development and Denver, CO: Education Commission of the States.

Lindblom, C. D. 1993. *The Policy-Making Process*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Marx, G. 1993. Lecture and handout, Falls Church, VA. (July).

Millennium Communications Group. (1999).*Communications as Engagement*. Report to the Rockefeller Foundation. //cdinet.com/Millennium.

Murphy, J. 1994. Cited in "Community Power Structure and Political Realities," in *Home-School-Community Relations: Trainers Manual and Study Guide*. L. E. Decker and Associates. Charlottesville, VA: Mid-Atlantic Center for Community Education.

Pisapia, J. 2000. "The Governance System: The Transformation of Authority into Educational Policy," in *Public School Administration: Foundations and Futures*. Columbus OH: Prentice-Hall. (In process).

Project Public Life. 1992. *The Book: The Political Educator's Guide to Citizen Politics*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota.

Public Agenda Online. 1999."Overview: The Issue at a Glance."www.publicagenda.com/issues/overview.cfm?issue-type=education

Thompson, J. T. 1976. *Policymaking in American Public Education*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Vondra, J. 1996. "Resolving Conflicts Over Values," *Educational Leadership*. (April).

CHAPTER VIII
SCHOOL SAFETY AND CRISIS MANAGEMENT

Schools function in a complicated, interconnected world. Events on school campuses in 1998 and 1999—urban and rural, demographically and geographically diverse—turned a spotlight on safety and security issues in our schools. They dramatically informed the nation that guns are brought to school, and some students will use them to kill. One after the other, school communities from Oregon to Virginia, Arkansas to Pennsylvania, Mississippi to Kentucky were forced to face the fact that violence can happen to them. Repercussions of the shootings at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, continue into the 1999-2000 school year.

Most schools are safe. But the complacency once based on that fact is gone. Awareness that every school has the potential for violence has made educators aware of the need to be proactive in prevention and creative in developing strategies for responding to trouble.

ISSUES MANAGEMENT

The term "issues management" is misleading. The *issue* may be a trend or a condition, either in the school or in the broader society, that does or will or may affect the school's mission of educating all children. What the educator hopes to *manage* is not the issue itself—which may well be beyond any individual's ability to control—but the school's response to it. One of the keys to success is preparedness: knowing which issues are already out there, and which are lurking around the next corner—and having a general plan for responding to them.

Issues may be categorized as critical, ongoing, or emerging. Critical issues command attention now. A school crisis falls into this category if it requires an immediate response to prevent harm, to ward off additional damage, or to provide emotional support. Ongoing issues are those that have to be dealt with regularly. Emerging issues are just beginning to appear and may not even be recognized as issues because they are in an early stage.

SCHOOL SAFETY

School safety is critically important to the total community. The public spotlight on school violence has moved the safety issue to crisis status in many communities. The U. S. Department of Education and the U. S. Department of Justice (1998) attempted to present the first comprehensive picture of the nature and scope of crime and violence on school property nationwide in a joint report, *Annual Report on School Safety.* Summarizing the findings, U. S. Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley said, "This comprehensive report proves that the vast majority of America's schools are still among the safest places for young people to be." Specifically, the report found:

- *Schools are basically safe places.* Forty-three percent of schools reported no incidents of crime; 90 percent reported no incidents of serious violent crime (defined as physical attack or fight with a weapon, rape, robbery, murder, or suicide); 47 percent reported at least one crime that was less serious or nonviolent; and 10 percent reported one or more incidents of serious violent crime.
- *Despite recent well-publicized occurrences, schools should not be singled out as especially dangerous places in a community; most school crime is theft, not serious violent crime.* In 1996, theft accounted for 62 percent of all crime against students at school. About 26 of every 1,000 students aged 12 to 18 were victims of serious violent crimes away from school in 1996 in contrast to about 10 of every 1,000 students at school or going to and from school.
- *Teachers' concerns about their own safety are not without foundation.* In 1992-1993, public and private school teachers schools reported on average about 30 violent crimes and 46 thefts for every 1,000 teachers.
- *Students in school today are not significantly more likely to be victimized than in previous years.* The overall school crime rate declined between 1993 and 1996 from 164 to 128 school-related crimes for every 1,000 students. Crime victimization outside of school declined from about 140 to 117 crimes for every 1,000 student during the same time period.

- *Fewer students are bringing weapons to school, and there are consequences for those who do.* Between 1993 and 1997 there was an overall decline from 12 percent to 9 percent among students in grades 9-12 who reported carrying a weapon to school in the previous month. In 1996-1997, states and territories expelled 6,093 students for bringing firearms to schools.
- *Some conditions, including the presence of gangs in schools, make students and teachers more vulnerable to school crime.* Between 1989 and 1995 the percentage of students who reported the presence of street gangs in school increased from 15 to 28 percent with increases reported in urban, suburban, and rural schools.
- *A majority of schools nationwide are implementing security measures on campuses.* Measures range from zero tolerance policies for firearms, alcohol, and drugs, to controlled access to school buildings and grounds, to requiring visitors to sign in before entering school facilities. In 1996-1997, 96 percent of public schools reported having some type of security measure in place.

Despite the fact that most schools are safe, the issue of school safety must be taken seriously. "No school is immune," the report emphasizes. "Creating a safe school requires having in place many preventive measures for children's mental and emotional problems—as well as a comprehensive approach to early identification of all warning signs that might lead to violence toward self or others."

In its safe schools guide, the Center for Effective Collaboration and Practice (1998) presents convincing documentation that prevention and early intervention efforts can reduce violence and other troubling behaviors. "In fact, research suggests that some of the most promising prevention and intervention strategies involve the entire educational community—administrators, teachers, families, students, support staff, and community members—working together to form positive relationships with all children."

The guide outlines characteristics of school communities in which effective prevention, intervention, and response strategies operate best. These school communities:

- *Focus on academic achievement.* They convey the attitude that all children can achieve academically and behave appropriately, while at the same time appreciating individual differences.
- *Involve families in meaningful ways.* They make parents feel welcome in school, address barriers to their participation, keep families positively engaged in their children's education, and support families in getting the help they need to address behaviors that cause concern.
- *Develop links to the community.* They develop and nurture close ties to families, support services, community police, faith-based communities, and the community at large, and benefit from the many resources these groups are willing to share.
- *Emphasize positive relationships among students and staff.* Research shows that a positive relationship with an adult who is available to provide support when it is needed is one of the most critical factors in preventing student violence. Effective schools make sure that opportunities exist for adults to spend high-quality, personal time with children. They also foster positive student interpersonal relationships, encouraging students to help each other and to feel comfortable about getting help for each other when needed.
- *Discuss safety issues openly.* Children come to school with many different perceptions—and misperceptions—about death, violence, and the use of weapons. Effective schools teach children appropriate strategies for dealing with their feelings and resolving conflicts, and teach them that the choices they make will have consequences for which they will be held accountable.
- *Treat students with respect.* A major source of conflict in many schools is the perceived or real problem of bias and unfair treatment by both staff and peers of students because of their ethnicity, gender, race, social class, religion, disability, nationality, sexual orientation, physical appearance, or some other factor. Effective schools communicate to students and the greater community that all children are valued and respected. There is a deliberate and systematic effort to establish a climate that demonstrates equal respect and a sense of community.
- *Create ways for students to share their concerns.* Peers are most likely to know in advance about potential school violence. Effective schools support and foster positive relationships between students and adults so students feel safe in reporting troubling behaviors and potentially dangerous situations.

- *Help children feel safe expressing their feelings.* Effective schools create ways for students to feel safe when expressing their needs, fears, and anxieties to school staff.
- *Have in place an appropriate system for referring children who are suspected of being abused or neglected.* The system must reflect federal and state guidelines.
- *Offer extended-day programs for children.* School-based before- and after-school programs that are well supervised and provide children a range of support services and activity options—e.g., counseling, mentoring, tutoring, community service, homework help—can be effective in reducing violence.
- *Promote good citizenship and character.* Effective schools reinforce such shared values as honesty, kindness, responsibility, and respect for others, while acknowledging that parents are the primary moral educators.
- *Identify problems and assess progress toward solutions.* Effective schools openly and objectively examine situations and circumstances that are potentially dangerous or intimidating for students and staff.
- *Support students in making the transition from school to adult life and the workplace.* Young people need assistance in planning for the future and in developing skills that will lead to success. In cooperative relationships with the community, effective schools provide students with community service opportunities, work-study programs, and apprenticeships that help students connect with caring adults in the community.

PLANNING FOR SAFETY

The Center for the Prevention of School Violence (1999) emphasizes that school administrators must be acutely aware that the potential for violence exists *every day*, and that awareness grounded in information is of most value. The Center recommends four things administrators can do to create information-based awareness:

- *Conduct site assessments.* The physical environment should be reviewed annually, with daily attention, to determine if there are any areas in which the safety of students and staff might be in jeopardy. Law enforcement officials, particularly school resource officers, can help train school staff to identify potential trouble spots and develop strategies for reducing the likelihood of an incident.
- *Keep statistics and use them in decision making.* Tracking disruptive and criminal incidents can help administrators make decisions about which prevention strategies and resources offer the most hope for solving particular problems.
- *Survey the entire school community.* With information generated from surveys of students, staff, and families, administrators can pinpoint areas of concern and employ strategies to address them.
- *Know and involve students.* Students must be involved in maintaining the safety and security of their own schools. They can be an invaluable resource. Staff need to know students' typical patterns of behavior so that deviations can be recognized and addressed.

With the information generated in these four steps, administrators can develop safe-school plans that are directed at a school's specific needs. Strategies should address the three dimensions the Center identifies as being associated with the safety and security of schools: place, people, and purpose. *Place* refers to the physical environment of the school. *People* refers to the relationships between and among people who are a part of the school community, including the potential for conflict. *Purpose* refers to a steady focus on the educational purpose of the school, so that the emphasis on safety and security does not have the effect of making a school take on the characteristics of a prison.

DISCIPLINE

In its guide to safe schools, the Center for Effective Collaboration and Practice (1998) points out that "a growing number of schools are discovering that the most effective way to reduce suspensions, expulsions, office referrals, and other similar actions...is to emphasize a proactive approach to discipline." Effective schools implement schoolwide campaigns that establish high expectations and provide support for socially appropriate behavior. They develop and consistently enforce schoolwide rules that are clear, broad-based, and fair. Rules and disciplinary procedures are developed collaboratively by representatives of the total educational community, are communicated clearly to all parties and, as the Center emphasizes, are followed consistently by everyone. Schools that are most effective:

- Develop a schoolwide disciplinary policy that includes a code of conduct with specific rules and consequences (including anti-harassment and anti-violence policies and due process rights) that can accommodate student differences on a case-by-case basis as necessary.
- Ensure that the cultural values and educational goals of the community are reflected in the rules, which should include a statement expressing the values that underlie the schoolwide disciplinary policy.
- Include school staff, students, and families in the development, discussion, and implementation of the rules, which should be perceived as fair.
- Make sure that consequences are commensurate with offenses and that rules are written and applied in a nondiscriminatory manner, accommodating cultural diversity.
- Make sure that negative consequences (such as the withdrawal of privileges) are combined with positive strategies that teach socially appropriate behavior and address external factors that might have caused the behavior.
- Include a statement of zero tolerance for possession of weapons, alcohol, or drugs.
- Provide services and support for students who have been suspended or expelled.

A PLANNED RESPONSE TO CRISIS

There is no way to guarantee that a crisis will not happen at any given school. Schools and school systems need trained crisis response teams and comprehensive crisis response plans. Opalewski and Robertson (1999) state that most school systems have basic crisis plans but lack detailed plans that specify the who, what, where, when, and how of crisis response. Underscoring the need for comprehensiveness, they ask if the plan covers:

- Catastrophic death, such as those resulting from a school bus accident?
- An HIV-positive student who announces his/her status?
- A memorial service held on school grounds?
- Separate policies and procedures for accidental versus suicidal death?
- Letters to parents and remembrance activities after a student's death?
- Dealing with the media?
- Returning personal property of deceased students or staff?
- Death occurring on school grounds while school is in session?
- Attempted suicide on school grounds, and a plan for the individual's return to school?
- Lesson plans for grieving students?
- Policies for replacing a teacher who dies?
- A catalogue of community resources that can help in a crisis?
- Establishing and staffing a crisis room?
- Counseling procedures for the crisis room?
- Debriefing personnel after a crisis?
- Counseling and other follow-up activities after a crisis?

SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY WORKING TOGETHER

School violence is obviously a concern, but Gottfredson (1999) points out that schools also have the potential for preventing violence.

> Schools ...provide regular access to students throughout the developmental years, and perhaps the only consistent access to large numbers of the most crime-prone young children in the early school years; they are staffed with individuals paid to help youth develop as healthy, happy, productive citizens. The community usually supports schools' efforts to socialize youth. Many of the precursors of delinquent behavior are school-related and therefore likely to be amenable to change through school-based intervention.

However, schools cannot work alone. It is often the violence in neighborhoods and communities that finds its way inside school doors. School violence frequently reflects a much broader problem that can only be addressed when everyone—school, home, and community—works together.

The National PTA focused attention on parent involvement and school violence at its June 1999 convention. The three categories ranked as top violence prevention factors by attendees were: parent involvement in schools (42 percent); smaller class size, smaller schools (28 percent); and parenting skills program on discipline and communication with children (28 percent) (Markell 1999).

Dwyer (1999), focusing attention on the community component, cites the work of Brendtro, Brokenleg, and Van Broken on the issue of belonging in school. He emphasizes that without a support structure from the family or the community, children tend to turn to such substitutes as gang loyalty, cult vulnerability, and the false security of sexually-focused relationships. Children without healthy outlets for their emotions feel lonely and rejected, isolated and unattached. Cooperative and collaborative working relationships among home, school, and community can help guard against these feelings by providing a positive means of self expression, emotional and spiritual support, and the security of a friendly, trusting, and gregarious network of social interactions.

Even when schools, families, and communities work together, the fact remains that schools are no longer insulated—if they ever were—from negative conditions in the communities around them. The schools' goal is to create learning environments that are safe, secure, intellectually stimulating, and engaging. But as Fuentes and Rose (1995) point out, schools everywhere—in the most densely to the most sparsely populated communities—are feeling the need to prepare for a variety of situations, including incidents of violence.

REFERENCES

Center for Effective Collaboration and Practice. 1998. *Early Warning, Timely Response: A Guide to Safe Schools.* Washington, DC: American Institutes for Research. www.air-dc.org/cecp/guide/.

Center for the Prevention of School Violence. 1999. *School Violence: Let's Get It Out of Our System.* Raleigh: North Carolina State University. www.ncsu.edu/cpsv/ingo%20planning/.

Dwyer, M. D. 1998. *Strengthening Community in Education: A Handbook for Change.* www.newmaine.com/community/index.

Fuentes, E. G., and Rose, R. M. 1995. *Being Prepared: The School Emergency Response Plan Handbook.* Andover, MA: Regional Laboratory for Education Improvement of the Northeast and Islands. www.neirl.org.

Gottfredson, D. C. 1999. "School-Based Crime Prevention," in Sherman, L. W., and others, *Preventing Crime: What Works, What Doesn't, What's Promising.* College Park: University of Maryland, Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice. www.ncjrs.org/works/chapter5/.

Markell, G. 1999. "Parent Involvement, Violence Prevention Top National PTA Priorities," *Our Children,* 25, 1 (August/September).

Opalewski, D., and Robertson, J. C. 1998. *Crisis Response Planning.* Kalamazoo, MI: Balance Group Publishers. www.bgpub.com/crises/.

U.S. Departments of Education and Justice. 1998. *Annual Report on School Safety.* www.ed.gov/pubs/SchoolSafety/.

WEBSITES

Most state education agencies have references on crisis management. The following are among the many resources available on the Internet:

Annual Report on School Safety (American Institutes of Research). A guide for developing and implementing a comprehensive school safety plan.
www.air-dc.org/cecp/guide.

The Complete Crisis Communications Management Manual for Schools (National School Public Relations Association). Action steps for dealing with major crises, do's and don't's for working with the media; checklists for school employees on dealing with hazards.
www.nspra.org.

Early Warning, Timely Response: A Guide to School Safety (U.S. Department of Education). Practical perspectives and suggestions regarding school climate, early warning signs, interventions for troubled children, responding to crises.
www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/OSEP/earlywrn.

National School Safety Center. Created by Presidential directive in 1984, provides training and resources, plus links to other resources.
www.nssc1.org.

An Ounce of Prevention: Prevention Yellow Pages (Texas Youth Commission). A worldwide directory of programs, research, references, and resources on the prevention of youth problems and the promotion of child nuturance.
www.tyc.state.tx.us/prevention/4000/ref.

Quick Response: A Step-by-Step to Crisis Management for Principals, Counselors, and Teachers (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development). Procedures for 15 crisis situations. Quick Reference: Seven Important Steps to Take in a Crisis (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development). An easy-to-follow checklist.
www.ascd.org.

Violence, Kids, Crisis: What You Can Do (National PTA). Provides parents with tools needed to combat school violence and lists resources for parents, educators, and other child advocates.
www.pta.org/crisis.

CHAPTER IX

PLANNING AND EVALUATING A COMPREHENSIVE HOME-SCHOOL-COMMUNITY RELATIONS PROGRAM

It is not a matter of luck that some schools have broad community support and successful community involvement programs and some don't. Schorr (1997) points out that successful schools take a broad long-range view of neighborhood transformation.

> [T]he success of neighborhood schools depends not only on formal and specialized services, it also depends on the creation of informal helping networks, including church and social ties, family support services, youth development programs, mentoring, recreational opportunities, and strong bonds among adults.... Instead of focusing on limited problems with circumscribed solutions, [schools] need to take a broader long-range view.... [T]he problems of depleted inner-city neighborhoods cannot be overcome by relying on neighborhood resources alone. Effective neighborhood transformation requires that community-based organizations be able to draw on funding, expertise, and influence from outside, and that outsiders be able to draw on the information, expertise, and wisdom that only can come from the neighborhood itself.

As the percentage of households with school-age children continues to decline, the success of a school system's educational efforts is likely to depend directly on its ability to communicate with the *total* community. Its public image is almost certain to affect the community's willingness to provide support. In the past, a home-school-community relations program might have succeeded simply by assuring the community that the schools were doing a good job. Today, an increasingly skeptical public, concerned with both fiscal and academic accountability, demands accurate, credible, and detailed information from the schools it is asked to support.

Increasingly, our society expects schools to deal, not just with formal learning, but with such difficult social issues as child abuse, drug addition, teen parenthood, AIDS, violence, guns, etc. Responding to these issues is not made easier by the fact that there is little agreement on what the school's response should be.

To build support for schools among the general public, a home-school-community relations program must be carefully planned and have in place an evaluation process that allows for adjustments as dictated by changes in the community and in the society as a whole. A fragmented approach simply will not work.

Wegner and Jarvi (1999) believe that an organization, regardless of its size or focus, should engage in four types of planning. *Strategic planning* develops an organization's vision and mission and then its goals and objectives, with an action plan. *Comprehensive planning* builds on the vision to provide specific long- and short-term directions and continuity for present and future organizational development. *Community planning* puts the organization in the "big picture" of the community and involves all sectors of the community. *Internal systems planning* is planning for the operational systems of the organization.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Strategic planning provides direction and meaning to the day-to-day activities of an organization. Romney (1996) explains why it is essential to any organization that must operate in a changing environment.

Strategic planning is a practical process for dealing with the ambiguities of the environment. Its purpose is to move the organization from being a pawn of changing events to being a proactive participant, making decisions about, and acting to create, its own future. It requires organizational flexibility to adapt and revise as conditions change, and a willingness to move beyond obsolete paradigms.

Romney recommends a six-step planning process, which must be adapted and adjusted to meet the needs of a particular organization. In general, the larger the organization, the more formal the process.

1. Assess the external environment.
2. Assess internal capacity.
3. Develop a vision or mission for the future.
4. Develop the goals and objectives to reach the future.
5. Implement the plan.
6. Measure progress and revise the plan.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

The first two steps involve environmental scanning—viewing the organization in the context of its internal and external environments. Internal factors, such as the organization's culture, its belief systems, and the interaction of its members, are directly related to *what* the organization can do and *how* it can do it. An internal assessment provides answers to such question as who are we; what do we believe; what can (and cannot) we do; whom do we serve; how are we seen.

Environmental scanning also looks at the community and the organization's place in it—its external environment. This assessment seeks answers to such questions as what is the community like and how is it changing; who else serves the community and the organization's clients; what needs to be done today and what will need to be done tomorrow.

In its most basic state, the strategic planning process asks the organization's stakeholders to address three basic questions (Wegner and Jarvi):

- Where are we now? How do stakeholders best describe the current environment surrounding the organization, as well as the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats facing it?
- Where would we like to be? If the world were a perfect place, how would we be likely to describe ourselves 10-15 years from now? (This constitutes the organization's vision of itself or its preferred future.)
- How do we get there? If stakeholders have a good idea of where they are now and what their preferred future would look like, they need to determine their part in developing strategies for moving the organization from its current condition to its preferred future. This part of the plan manifests itself as a set of strategies around which action steps must be designed and performance measured; the strategic plan thus becomes the measure by which success of the organization is judged.

Wegner and Jarvi emphasize that, beyond the obvious outcomes of the planning process, important additional benefits can be expected because of the process itself:

- Helps articulate questions that ordinarily would not be addressed about the function and direction of the organization.
- Helps identify constituent groups that have a need to be served and that may otherwise have been overlooked.
- Creates partnerships that may have been formerly overlooked.
- Generates new and constructive ideas from all levels within the organization.
- Helps prioritize resources to ensure efficiency of effort.
- Helps to eliminate programs and services that are no longer viable.
- Encourages ownership and commitment from all stakeholders.
- Creates benchmarks for assessing the performance of the organization itself, as well as of individual managers within the organization.
- Develops tremendous power within the organization as all of its elements focus on commonly held strategies, unleashing formerly unidentified synergism.

COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING

Comprehensive planning is based on the strategic plan; it identifies the specific steps that need to be taken to implement the vision and mission. It is both an inventory of existing conditions and a list of recommendations for future programs and services, acquisition and development of areas and facilities, and administration. It provides specific long- and short-term direction and continuity for both present and future programs, services, and physical resource development. The comprehensive system plan has two distinct but related dimensions—a program/services plan and a physical resources plan—and is the operational blueprint for the administrator as well as a valuable tool for ongoing decision making (Wegner and Jarvi).

COMMUNITY PLANNING

Community planning implies a commitment to work together. It is a collaborative effort in which representatives of agencies and organizations get together to consider the needs, resources, and objectives of each and to work out plans for integrating each agency and organization into the community as a whole. It may involve social planning or physical resource planning, or both. It includes assessing what is happening in legislatures and other regulatory bodies, as well as population shifts and changing social and

economic conditions. Community planning has the benefit of helping agencies and organizations understand each other and the direction being taken by each, and of mitigating some potential turf issues.

INTERNAL SYSTEMS PLANNING

Internal systems planning, essential for effective operational management, integrates the various components of an organization: typically, the plans for maintenance, information technology, public relations and marketing, human resources, financial management and budgeting, risk management, law enforcement and security, and evaluation (Wegner and Jarvi 1999).

THE BASIC STEPS IN PLANNING

Planning is the continuous process of obtaining, organizing, and using information systematically by answering the following questions:

- What is the scope of the planning effort and who will be involved?
- What outcomes are desired?
- What resources will help the effort and what restraints will hinder it?
- What specific things must be achieved to reach the goals?
- How many methods or ways are possible to accomplish each specific thing to be done?
- Which method or methods are best?
- Who is going to implement the methods, and when?
- Was the effort successful? If not, what changes need to be made? (Decker and Associates 1994)

The planning process should be viewed as a cycle that revolves through the following steps.

- *Focus planning effort.* The basic premise should be that the planning is done *with*, not *for*, the people whose interests are at stake. Everyone needs to understand the following dimensions:
  - What is to be planned.
  - What type of process will be used to plan.
  - Who is to be involved in, or directly affected by, the planning effort.
  - Whether the planning effort is directed to immediate or long-range goals.
- *Determine goals and priorities.* Goals, the foundation of the entire planning process, are usually based on the results of a needs-assessment process. Without goals, planning is impossible. Goals are broad, general statements of desired outcomes, but they must not be vague. If a goal is not understood clearly by everyone involved, it may be impossible to gain the support and commitment necessary to achieve it. (Objectives are concrete statements of specific desired outcomes expected as a result of achieving a goal.)
- *Identify resources and constraints.* In this step, the setting is analyzed to determine, in a general sense, the major resources and constraints for each goal. Resources are those things that will help, support, or have a positive impact on the achievement of a specific goal. Constraints are those things that will hinder, inhibit, or have a negative impact upon goal achievement. Some things may be either resources or constraints:

people	material	geography
money	transportation	technology
facilities	structure	culture
time	environment	communications
agencies	laws	institutions

- *Formulate objectives.* Objectives are formulated by breaking the goal statement into its parts. Each objective should be specific and clear, so that everyone involved understands exactly what is to be accomplished. Objectives are statements of desired outcomes or purposes around which programs and activities are to be developed. Clarity requires that the objectives include a statement of who will benefit from the outcome, and when the outcome is expected to be achieved.
- *Generate alternative methods.* The process of generating alternative methods provides an opportunity for creativity. The purpose of this step is to identify as many ways as possible to achieve the stated objectives. Those involved in the idea-generation process should make a conscious effort not to criticize any of the ideas put forth; only after all the alternatives have been generated and listed for each objective should they be analyzed and compared.
- *Analyze and select best methods.* Decisions must now be made on which methods would work best in the program of action. Each alternative should be analyzed carefully using a combination of systematic analysis and sound judgment. Only after the criteria have been

agreed upon and their relative weight determined can each alternative be analyzed and a method selected. Some common criteria are cost, convenience, effectiveness, and feasibility.

- *Develop program of action.* The program of action has at least four major components: (1) goal statements; (2) objectives; (3) methods; and (4) activities. The program development procedures in the planning process provide answers to the following questions:
  - What major activities are necessary to implement the methods selected?
  - Who (specific names) is responsible for performing each of the major activities?
  - What are the starting and completion dates for each of the major activities?
  - What basic resources (people, money, materials, facilities, etc.) are needed to perform each major activity?
- *Evaluate process and results.* Process evaluation involves monitoring and reporting on implementation procedures to determine if the methods and activities are being performed in the way in which they were designed. Process evaluation should describe the methods for collecting, organizing, and reporting information about the progress of the program of action. It should provide answers to the following questions.
  - Who (specific names) will be responsible for monitoring each major activity and reporting on progress?
  - When (specific dates) will the progress reports be submitted?
  - Who (specific names) will be responsible for collecting the progress reports and developing a program status report?
  - When (specific dates) will the status reports be available?
  - What will be the form of the progress and program status reports?
  - Who (specific names) will receive the program status reports?

  Results evaluation can also be performed by monitoring and reporting. The description of the procedures to be used for collecting, organizing, and reporting information regarding the outcomes of the program of action should answer the following questions:
  - Who (specific names) will be responsible for collecting and reporting information on the achievement of the objectives of the program?
  - What indicators will be used to determine the degree to which the objectives have been achieved?
  - Will the program of action be modified and continued or will it be phased out if the objectives are not achieved as stated?
  - Who (specific names) will receive reports on the results of the program of action?

Information from the evaluation of both process and results should be used to improve the program, with the cycle beginning again in a continuous process.

EVALUATION: AN OUTCOMES ORIENTATION

A comprehensive home-school-community relations plan should be viewed as an integrated whole—each step influencing and being influenced by every other step in the process. Evaluation should therefore be a continuous process throughout the development of the plan. New information or changes at any point in the process may prompt reevaluation of the preceding steps and a rethinking of the organization's future. The final, formal evaluation step can then be seen as a fine-tuning of the plan to fit the realities of actual day-to-day implementation.

Schorr (1997) points out that evaluation methods have been changing since the mid-1980s because of the public's desire for proof of results. She argues that "traditional evaluation models have been ineffectual in helping to understand which aspects of a program are having a desired effect and which components are weak and ineffective," and explains why theory-based evaluation is superior to statistical analysis alone.

> Most traditional evaluation studies lack a strong conceptual and theoretical framework that would explain how and why a social intervention might achieve a desired outcome. Theory-based evaluation provides what statistical analysis alone cannot furnish: conceptual specification of underlying causal mechanisms though which a program is thought to operate. By combining outcome measures with an understanding of the process that produced the outcomes...theory-based evaluation can shed light both on the extent of impact and on how the change occurred.... These innovative approaches are

not only guided by a strong conceptual and theoretical base, they also employ multiple research techniques, including both quantitative and qualitative methods, to capture and document the full complexity of the social intervention.

An outcomes orientation encourages planners to think about the results they are trying to achieve rather than the procedures they are following. Outcomes accountability requires clarity about goals, and focuses everyone's attention on why they are doing what they are doing. Schorr emphasizes that this approach is essential when local agencies are given greater discretion in interventions. It also allows "communities to be more deliberate in support of shared purposes" and "illuminates whether investments are adequate to achieve expected results."

There are, she acknowledges, some legitimate fears about outcomes accountability:

- Programs may be distorted—what gets done is what is most easily measured or what has the most rapid payoff.
- Even effective programs will seem to accomplish less than they actually do, especially if rapid results are expected.
- In complex, interactive strategies that are the most promising, responsibility for both progress and failure cannot be accurately ascribed to any one agency.
- Determinants of outcomes are often outside the control of those being held accountable.
- Outcomes accountability could become a screen behind which protections for the vulnerable are destroyed—for example, it could lead to the abandonment of the input and process regulations that now restrict the arbitrary exercise of front-line discretion by a powerful institution against powerless clients.

Schorr finds that most of these fears are countered when planning starts with the following premises:

- *The goals are ambitious and the outcomes measurable.* Ambitious goals can become a framework within which outcome measures can be selected for purposes of accountability, with the understanding that only some aspects of these goals can currently be measured with available data and with outcome measures around which it is possible to gain broad agreement.
- *The outcomes are easy to understand and persuasive to skeptics.* Outcomes measures must be consistent with common sense and be broadly compelling, not just to experts and those who already support the program.
- *The outcomes authentically reflect the purposes to be achieved.* The challenge is to devise measures that come as close as possible to reflecting what ought to get done.
- *A distinction is maintained between outcomes and processes.* A failure to distinguish between process measures describing what is going on and outcome measures describing what is being accomplished will result in confusion between means and ends, and planners will lose sight of what is actually happening to people as a result of the activity.
- *Outcomes are placed in a broader accountability context.* Even at its best, outcomes-based accountability may not always capture the full effects of some excellent interventions.

Schorr adds a reminder: "In efforts to select the right outcomes, no one should be under the illusion that any one set of outcomes or outcome measures will be perfect. They will have to be refined always, sometimes renegotiated, and evolve continuously."

SOME TECHNIQUES AND TOOLS IN EVALUATION

A variety of techniques and tools can be used to evaluate a home-school-community relations program. One technique is an audit. Audits are sometimes completed by outside experts and consultants with broad experience and knowledge of comprehensive school-community relations efforts. An audit should pinpoint both strengths and weaknesses, uncover needs, and give a rationale for greater effort in school-community relations.

The National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA) recommends doing a communications audit, described as a compilation of a snapshot of the school's or school district's needs, policies, capabilities, activities and programs (NSPRA 1999). An audit assesses the effectiveness and credibility of current publications and other communications and marketing activities. It involves a review of public relations/communications policies and examines budget, current plans and staffing patterns. It looks at demographic data, long-range plans, and past surveys of family/staff/community attitudes and reviews cover-

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

age by the local newspaper, radio, and television media. NSPRA recommends using focus groups of 8-10 people representing citizens, parents, business people, administrators, teachers, support staff, and other key audiences whose support is needed to improve communications in the district or the community.

NSPRA suggests using five major steps in a comprehensive communications audit:

- *Make the decision to do it.* Nothing is more important in building trust and support between your organization and the public you serve than the quality of your communications effort. Are you addressing the community's concerns? Are you communicating effectively? Does your staff understand and support what you are trying to do?
- *Analyze the current program.* It is important to review your existing policies, publications, strategies, media relationships—every aspect of your internal and external communications effort.
- *Listen to your audiences.* The core of the audit is focus groups that are representative of your internal and external audiences. They can generate more useful information than most surveys because a trained facilitator can probe the feelings behind their opinions. The number and composition of focus groups may vary depending on the main purpose of a particular aspect of the audit.
- *Develop constructive recommendations for improving your communications program.* Based on an analysis of your current program and the input from the focus groups, make recommendations for improvement.
- *Get implementation assistance when appropriate.* Once the decision is made to take steps to improve or update aspects of your public relations/communications programs, it may be necessary to examine sample materials and policies. Colleagues who have successfully dealt with similar situations can be contacted and/or experts consulted.

The National Committee for Citizens in Education (1993) developed a process for assessing a school's progress toward increasing family involvement. The process, known as *Taking Stock,* is a systematic way of looking at a school's relationship with families. The designers stress that the process is *not* an "evaluation" by outsiders to be used against the school, but a family-friendly way for a school to identify its strengths and weakness from families' perspectives. The process uses a survey form resembling a report card. Families are asked to grade each item on a scale of 1-4, with 4 being excellent. When the "report cards" are returned, the average for each category is calculated, giving the school a "final grade" in each section. Following is an example.

Taking Stock: Family Report Card

School _____

(Grade each of the following on a scale of 1-4, with 4 being excellent; calculate average for each category.)

	Grade	Final Grade
REACHING OUT TO FAMILIES		
1. Communicating often and openly with families	____	
2. Reaching all cultures and language groups	____	
3. Reaching working and single parents	____	
4. Extra efforts to reach all families	____	____
WELCOMING FAMILIES TO THE SCHOOL BUILDING		
5. School's welcome to families	____	
6. Open and available school and staff	____	
7. Encouraging volunteers	____	
8. Active and strong PTA/PTO	____	
9. Major PTA/PTO activities	____	
10. Reaching out to the community	____	____
DEVELOPING STRONG RELATIONSHIPS		
11. Teachers communicate with parents	____	
12. Parent-teacher partnership	____	
13. Parent-principal relationship	____	
14. Parents involved in decision making	____	
15. School's parent involvement policy	____	____
HELPING PARENTS UNDERSTAND THE CURRICULUM		
16. Information about the curriculum	____	
17. Goals for student achievement	____	
18. Information on student performance	____	
HELPING PARENTS BE MORE EFFECTIVE		
19. School supports parents	____	
20. School connects to community services	____	____

A 3.2-4.0 Great job. Keep up the good work!
B 2.6-3.1 Good work. A little more will put you on top!
C 2.0-2.5 Solid beginning. Time for some next steps!
U 1.0-1.9 Needs improvement. Let's get to work!

How Customer Friendly Is Your School?

How Customer Friendly Is Your School? (Chambers 1998), an instrument that focuses on a visitor's or telephoner's first impressions, asks yes or no questions about the school environment and telephone service to find out how people perceive the school.

ENVIRONMENT

Grounds:

___ Are the grounds attractively landscaped?
___ Are they clean and well maintained?
___ Is there adequate visitor parking?
___ Is there easy access from visitor parking to the main entrance?

Entrance:

___ Is the main entry clearly marked (including directions for visitor parking)?
___ Do entry signs welcome visitors and give directions to the main office?
___ Does the main entrance set a good tone for the school?
___ Does it feel warm and welcoming (well-lit, with bright colors)?
___ Is it clean and in good repair?
___ Does it highlight student, teacher, and school accomplishments (pictures, awards, student projects, artwork, etc.)?
___ Does it provide a positive image for the school?
___ Is it free of unpleasant noises or unfriendly written rules or directions?

Interior:

___ Are halls and rooms clean, well decorated, and in good repair?
___ Are rooms and common areas such as the library clearly marked?
___ Are students' work and accomplishments highlighted on the walls or in display cases?
___ Is the lighting bright and the temperature comfortable?
___ Are announcement and bell systems set at a comfortable decibel level?

Main Office:

___ Can the sign for the main office be clearly seen from a distance and from all approaches?
___ Can office personnel easily see visitors when they enter?
___ Is the decor of the office inviting (cheerful colors, good lighting, clean, neat, and in good repair)?

Main Office:(cont'd):

___ Are desks and other areas in view of visitors kept organized and clean?
___ Is there a nameplate identifying the person responsible for greeting visitors?
___ Do office personnel greet visitors within a few seconds of their entry—letting them know they'll be right with them if they can't help them immediately?
___ Are all office personnel welcoming and helpful (smiling, offering to escort visitors when necessary)?
___ Is there a comfortable place for visitors to sit while waiting for appointments?
___ Is the noise level comfortable and the area free of unpleasant odors?
___ Do office staff avoid personal conversations in public areas?

TELEPHONE ETIQUETTE

___ Are all employees—not just secretaries—informed about proper etiquette for answering calls and taking messages?
___ Do they answer by immediately identifying the school or department and themselves?
___ Do they answer in a pleasant tone of voice, making callers feel they are happy to be of assistance?
___ Are they helpful to callers? When unable to answer a question, do they try to find the answer themselves to avoiding routing the call to another person?

AUTOMATED ANSWERING SERVICES AND VOICE MAIL

___ Is the automated answering service easy to understand and follow, giving the caller an option to speak to a person if desired?
___ Does it give office hours and let callers know when the school is not in session?
___ Does the automated service provide callers with directions to the school?

Some other planning and evaluation resources related specifically to home-school-community relations are:

- *School, Family, and Community: Techniques and Models for Successful Collaboration*, Michael J. Dietz, editor; Aspen Publishers, Gaithersburg, MD, 1997.
- *Everybody's House—The Schoolhouse: Best Techniques for Connecting Home, School, and Community*, Carolyn Warner with Marilyn Curry; Corwin Press, Thousand Oaks, CA, 1997.
- *Learning from Others: Good Programs and Successful Campaigns*, Chrissie Bamber, Nancy Berla, and Anne T. Henderson, Center for Law and Education; Washington, DC, 1996.

ACHIEVING A COMMON PURPOSE

In her examination of programs and interventions, Schorr (1997) identifies what she calls the "Seven Attributes of Highly Effective Programs." Successful programs, she says:

- Are comprehensive, flexible, responsive, and persevering.
- See children in the context of their families.
- Deal with families as parts of neighborhoods and communities.
- Have a long-term, preventive orientation, a clear mission, and continue to evolve over time.
- Are well managed by competent and committed individuals with clearly identifiable skills.
- Have staffs that are trained and supported to provide high-quality, responsive services.
- Operate in a setting that encourages practitioners to build strong relationships based on mutual trust and respect.

Schorr describes eight strategies used by successful programs.

1. Recognize the Seven Attributes of Highly Effective Programs and create environments that will support them.
2. Distinguish between essentials that can be replicated from other programs and components that must be developed or adapted locally.
3. Find ways to surmount obstacles to fundamental change, so that the attributes of successful demonstrations can become the norms of mainstream systems. Don't limit innovation to program changes. Find new ways to balance bureaucratic protections against the imperative of accomplishing public purposes.
4. In undertaking major initiatives, make sure that funders, managers, front-line staff, and program participants agree on valued outcomes. Make sure that all stakeholders understand how the initiative's activities and investments are related to outcomes, so that they will be able to use results to judge success.
5. Take a broader view. Give up on searching for a single intervention that will be a one-time fix, and forget about selecting among economic development, public safety, community building, education reform, or service reform in an effort to find a single most promising way to intervene. Try to carve out a manageable piece of the problem, but look for opportunities to have an impact broader than a circumscribed solution to a circumscribed problem.
6. Take a long view. Forget about getting results overnight and be prepared to build for the future.
7. Recognize that intensity and critical mass may be crucial. Create the synergy that can bring about real change and tip a neighborhood toward becoming functional.
8. Forget about choosing between bottom-up and top-down approaches. Effective neighborhood transformation requires that community-based organizations be able to draw on funding, expertise, and influence from outside, and that outsiders be able to draw on the information, expertise, and wisdom that can come only from the neighborhood itself.

REFERENCES

Bamber, C.; Berla, N.; and Henderson, A. T. 1996. *Learning from Others: Good Programs and Successful Campaigns.* Washington, DC: Center for Law and Education, with the Academy for Educational Development.

Chambers, L. 1998. "How Customer Friendly Is Your School?" *Educational Leadership,* 56, 2 (October).

Dietz, M. J. *School, Family, and Community: Techniques for Successful Collaboration.* 1997. Gaithersburg, MD: Aspen Publishers.

National Committee for Citizens in Education. 1993. *Taking Stock.* Washington, DC.

National School Public Relations Association. 1999. *Communications Audit.* www.nspra.org/main_audit.

Romney, V. 1996. *Strategic Planning and Needs Assessment.* Fairfax, VA: National Community Education Association.

Schorr, L. B. 1997. *Common Purpose: Strengthening Families and Neighborhoods to Rebuild America.* New York: Anchor Books, Doubleday.

Warner, C., with Curry, M. 1997. *Everybody's House The Schoolhouse: Best Techniques for Connecting Home, School, and Community.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Wegner, D., and Jarvi, C. K. 1999. "Planning for Strategic Management," in *Management of Park and Recreation Agencies.* B. vander Smissen and M. Moichichik, eds. Ashburn, VA: National Park and Recreation Association.

CHAPTER X

MAKING FRIENDS BEFORE YOU NEED THEM

Former President Lyndon Johnson is credited with having said, "The best time to make friends is before you need them." Today's educational leaders would do well to follow his advice.

Meek (1999) emphasizes the importance of this advice in context of contrasting the current educational environment with what are sometimes called "the good old days."

> Only a few years ago, teachers and administrators could count on a fair amount of community support for schools—or at least on broad passive acceptance of their efforts. ...Schools closely reflected the traditions and priorities of their local community. In many communities, even when parents could afford the tuition for private or parochial education, public schools enrolled the majority of students.... Whether private, public, or parochial schools were the choice, however, most families expected to stay put, the curriculum was relatively unchanging, and teachers typically taught for years, often in the same classroom. School affairs were predictable, uneventful, even downright dull....
>
> Today, schools operate in a demanding policy climate—one in which national, state, and local policymakers advocate new programs, demand results, and scrutinize endless amounts of data to see whether schools are performing acceptably. The importance of schools in the economic development of both the nation and the local community, along with the potential of schools to contribute to the quality of life in a locality, has become increasingly clear....
>
> In addition, schools currently face a rather long list of expectations and needs generated by families.... Indeed, as clients, today's parents are demanding consumers—they know what they want, they have high standards for service, and they may complain loudly if they don't find services up to standard. Parents are accustomed to moving from place to place, often selecting housing based on the reputation of neighborhood schools. ...In addition, as voucher or choice provisions increase, many more parents may have the option of sending their children to schools outside the immediate neighborhoods....
>
> Schools themselves have changed, too. Today's public schools possess a number of attributes and offer a variety of services and programs unheard of when today's parents were growing up.... What's more, the curriculum is no longer the predictable entity it was in the past. New research findings and new concepts of how students learn, professional associations, religious conservatives, textbook and software publishers, as well as the demands of policymakers and business leaders contemplating the role of the United States in the global marketplace all have influenced today's curriculum frameworks. What's more, today's schools serve *all* students, including those who might have, in an earlier era, quietly vanished from school to work on farms or in factories.
>
> In short, profound changes have occurred in U.S. schools. School programs are different from those of the past. Parental needs and expectations have grown more complex and challenging. The environment in which schools operate—the policy climate—reflects an often critical attitude, with intense competition for tax dollars at a time when the majority of the public has no children in school. Under such circumstances, educators face a new imperative: we must [effectively communicate] so as to inform, listen to, and learn from our various publics.... [We must] make friends before we need them.

WOOING THE PUBLIC

The influence of the family and the community on what happens inside school walls has been well documented by many research studies. Rich (1998) counsels that what happens inside the school also affects the community. Educators, she says, must find—or take the time—to fulfill the public's need for a new set of R's: respect, reassurance, and recognition. These three R's can improve children's achievement and woo the public at the same time. Respect, reassurance, and recognition, like the old three R's of reading,

riting, and rithmetic, are intimately connected with academic achievement, especially when the goal is building a sense of investment for everyone in the community.

Rich says that educators who want the public to care about local schools must develop school and district plans that:

- *Build respect.*
  - Set educational responsibilities for the family. Send messages and establish climates that communicate the ideas that families are important partners in the educational process and that every family has strengths that can be mobilized on behalf of children.
  - Make school schedules convenient for families. Overcoming the problems caused by conflicting schedules of working parents and teachers may mean changing the time and place of parent-teacher conferences or restructuring teacher time.
  - Undertake collaborative efforts to reach families. A networks of agencies, community groups, businesses, and media can help provide a variety of supports, including mentoring and apprenticeships.
  - Use school for community needs. By increasing the use of school facilities to serve community needs, schools can position themselves to be more than just suppliers of services; they can be facilitators of learning for the community.
- *Supply reassurance.*
  - Provide practical information families need. Research confirms families' readiness to learn more about how to help their children. They want to know how to help before there are problems. Materials are already written and are readily available from a variety of sources.
  - Offer a realistic picture of what school can accomplish. Build public awareness of the many roles and services the school provides, its basic strengths, and the challenges and problems encountered by families and schools today. Create a strong understanding of what even the best schools cannot do.
  - Encourage family involvement at all levels of schooling and at every age. School efforts focusing on parent-child communication can allay the fear of teens that no one cares about them and that their schooling lacks meaning.
  - Provide an active role for fathers. Find ways to encourage fathers to be involved directly at home and at school. Use messages that support the image of men as caregivers, not just providers.
  - Provide training and information for teachers. Part of a new and enhanced role for teachers is integrating what is learned outside the classroom with what is learned inside. This involves working with adults as well as children.
- *Provide recognition.*
  - Start early, before children come to school. Provide information to parents about their education role, starting with a child's birth. Education for successful schooling can begin with in-hospital programs sponsored by schools.
  - Establish connection with family daycare. Schools can offer training about education for daycare providers through a variety of media, from print to local cable channels.
  - Create helpful roles for the private sector. Provide businesses with information on how they can support family-school relationships. Businesses can contribute more than volunteers for classrooms; they can provide employees with time off for parent-teacher conferences and offer information and support that reduces stress and work-home conflict.
  - Let people know they are appreciated. It is important that every person involved with the school is recognized and feels valued. Recognition is especially vital to parents. Share news about what has been accomplished. Ensure that both school and family accomplishments are widely shared through a variety of media and at local civic and community group meetings. The accomplishments of schools, students, and families are community accomplishments; if they are presented in that light, everyone will share in this sense of success.

Purkey and Stanley (1995) reflect a similar theme in what they call "invitational education," the practice of creating a school environment that helps people realize their potential in all areas of human activity. The purpose is "to make learning, teaching, leading and living an exciting, satisfying and enriching experience for everyone in and around schools."

The five propositions of invitational education are:

- Education should be a cooperative activity.

- Process is as important as product.
- People are able, valuable, and responsible and should be treated accordingly.
- People possess untapped potential in all areas of worthwhile human endeavor.
- Potential can best be realized through programs and processes designed to invite development, participated in by people who intentionally unite with others.

TAPPING THE POTENTIAL

A national survey by the League of Women Voters, WorkingTogether: Community Involvement in America (Duskin 1999), concluded that the growing pressures of juggling the multiple tasks and responsibilities of contemporary life are reflected in a new form of involvement. The emerging trend is for community engagement to be localized and personalized, and channeled through individual and group-based activities rather than through established organizations. "One of the key factors in whether people are going to get involved nowadays is whether they feel they are going to be able to make a difference."

People seem to be channeling their energy in more personal ways. "There is a growing tendency to want to connect personal responsibility and individual freedom. They [the participants in the study] see the community as the place to do this." The study also found that not everyone limits the concept of community to geography; shared values and experience often play a role in what, for participants, makes up a community.

The study found that the barriers that keep people from community involvement are attitudinal or structural. The attitudinal barrier is the belief that one person cannot make a difference in solving problems. The stronger the belief that the person can make a difference, the more likely his or her involvement in community activities. The biggest structural barrier is time. Involvement that requires a regular time commitment or requires big blocks of time discourages participation. Providing *flexibility* and *choice* in terms of both time and tasks is a major way to overcome attitudinal and structural barriers.

SUMMING UP

"Making friends before you need them" requires proactive educational leaders. Strengthening connections requires *reaching out* to families and community members and *achieving an accurate understanding* of the kind of family-school-community collaboration needed to achieve the goal of academic success for all children.

Too often school communications are reactive, involving some kind of crisis: a student is failing, a weather emergency looms, a classroom is affected by an environmental hazard, a parent faction or community group is unhappy about part of the curriculum or a particular program. These kinds of communications precipitated by such emergencies frequently have negative repercussions, both short- and long-term.

If educators want family and community support, they must ask for it, regularly and often. The key to whether support is forthcoming is the way people are asked; the more personal the approach, the more likely it is to elicit the desired response. When messages were tested in the League of Women Voters study (Duskin 1999), those that got the best response spoke directly to the stake people have in their communities and the tangible difference their involvement could make. The two types of invitations that were the most persuasive to those who received them were those that emphasized personal responsibility and those that conveyed a "can do" message. One particularly effective message was: "There is no better way to demonstrate good values to a child than to show him or her what it's like to make a difference in that child's particular community."

The Annenberg Institute of School Reform's newsletter (1999) describes today's public educational leadership as the "art of pushing from behind."

> While [school leaders] are still key conveners and facilitators of the work of school improvement, they must also invite a new corps of school and community leaders to the forefront in building a collective vision for the work. Leadership isn't pulling people along anymore: it's about orchestrating ideas, people, visions, potential, and organizations into a cohesive program for educational improvement. The most effective and inclusive styles of educational leadership

today combine both bottom-up and top-down approaches. School and district leaders must share power and delegate key decision-making authority to representative teams of teachers, parents, business leaders, senior citizens, and others. The multiple interests and expectations that these stakeholder teams bring to the table are crucial to building a common vision for their community's education system. A sustained, inclusive dialogue identifies priorities, targets strengths, and insures that even the softest voice is heard.

Engaging families and communities in public education is the pathway to educational success.

REFERENCES

Annenberg Institute for School Reform. 1999. *Public Engagement Today,* 2 (Spring). www.aisr.brown.edu/html/pe/news2pl.

Duskin, M. 1999. "Community Activism: An Untapped Reservoir," *National Voter,* 49, 1(September/October).

Meek, A. 1999. *Communicating with the Public: A Guide for School Leaders.* Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. www.ascd.org/books/meekpublicbook.

Purkey, W. W., and Stanley, P. H. 1995. "Invite School Success: A Treasury of 1001 Ideas," *Journal of Educational Relations,* 16, 4 (November).

Rich, D. 1998. "Respect, Reassurance, Recognition," *Journal of Educational Relations,* 19, 3 (3rd Quarter).

APPENDIX 1.

ASSOCIATION AND ORGANIZATION CONTACT INFORMATION

The following are the addresses, websites, and phone numbers for associations and organizations cited in this publication.

ORGANIZATION	ADDRESS	CITY/STATE/ZIP	WWW SITE/URL	PHONE
A-Plus Communications	Arlington Courthouse Plaza I 2200 Clarendon Blvd., Suite 1102	Arlington, VA 22201	www.apluscommunications.com	703/524-7325
Afterschool.gov	Federal Support to Communities 750 17th St. NW, Suite 200	Washington, DC 20006	www.afterschool.gov	202/632-0150
America's Promise	909 No. Washington St., Suite 400	Alexandria, VA 22314	www.americaspromise.org	703/684-4500
American Association of School Administrators	1801 North Moore St.	Arlington, VA 22209	www.aasa.org	703/528-0070
American Federation of Teachers	555 New Jersey Ave. NW	Washington, DC 20001	www.aft.org	202/879-4400
American Institute for Research	3333 K St. NW	Washington, DC 20007	www.air-dc.org	202/342-5000
Annenberg Institute for School Reform	Brown University, Box 1985	Providence, RI 02912	www.aisi.brown.edu	401/863-7990
Annie E. Casey Foundation	701 St. Paul St.	Baltimore, MD 21202	www.aecf.org	410/547-6600
Asset-Based Community Development Institute	Institute of Policy Research Northwestern University/ 2040 Sheridan Road	Evanston, IL 60208	www.nwu.edu/IPR	847/491-8711
Assn for Volunteer Administration	PO Box 32902	Richmond, VA 23294	www.avaintl.org	804/346-2266
Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development	1703 North Beauregard St.	Alexandria, VA 22311	www.ascd.org	703/578-9600 800/933-2723
Balance Group Publishers	PO Box 3266	Kalamazoo, MI 49003	www.bgpub.com	616/349-1259
Benton Foundation	1800 K St. NW, Second Floor	Washington, DC 20006	www.benton.org	202/638-5770
Carnegie Corporation of New York	437 Madison Ave.	New York, NY 10022	www.carnegie.org	212/371-3200
Center for Effective Collaboration and Practice	American Institute of Research 1000 Thomas Jefferson St. NW, Suite 400	Washington, DC 20007	www.air-dc.org/cecp	202/944-5400 888/457-1551
Center for Law and Education	1875 Connecticut Ave. NW, Suite 510	Washington DC 20009	www.cleweb.org	202/986-3000
Center for Civic Education	5146 Douglas Fir Rd.	Calabasas, CA 91302	www.civiced.org	818/591-9321

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

ORGANIZATION	ADDRESS	CITY/STATE/ZIP	WWW SITE/URL	PHONE
Center for Democracy & Citizenship	Humphrey Inst. of Public Affairs 301 19th Ave. South	Minneapolis, MN 55455	www.hhh.umn.edu	612/625-0142
Center for Living Democracy	289 Fox Farm Road	Brattleboro, VT 05301	www.livingdemocracy.org	802-254-1234
Center for the Prevention of School Violence	North Carolina State University 20 Enterprise St., Suite 2	Raleigh, NC 27607	www.ncsu.edu/cpsv	919/515-9397 800/299-6054
Charles S. Mott Foundation	1200 Mott Foundation Building	Flint, MI 48502	www.mott.org	810/238-5651
Child Trends	4301 Connecticut Ave. NW, Suite 100	Washington, DC 20008	www.childtrends.org	202/362-5580
Children, Youth, and Family Consortium	University of Minnesota, University Gateway, 270A, 200 Oak St. SE	Minneapolis, MN 55455	www.cyfc.umn.edu	
Children's Defense Fund	25 E St. NW	Washington, DC 20001	www.childrensdefense.org	202/628-8787
Civic Practices Network	Center for Human Resources Brandeis University, 60 Turner St.	Waltham, MA 02154	www.cpn.org	617/736-4890
Close up Foundation	44 Canal Center Plaza	Alexandria, VA 22314	www.closeup.org	800/256-7387
Coalition for America's Children	Homer Bldg. 601 13th St. NW, Suite 400 N	Washington, DC 20005	www.uaskids.org	202/347-8600
Coalition for Community Schools	Inst. for Educational Leadership, 1001 Connecticut Ave. NW, Suite 310	Washington, DC 20036	www.communityschools.org	202/822-8405
Colorado Parent Information and Resource Center	1445 Market St., Suite 350	Denver, CO 80202	www.cpirc.org	303/820-5624
Comer School Development Program	55 College St.	New Haven, CT 06510	http://infor.med.yale.edu/comer	203/737-1020
Communitarian Network	2130 H St. NW Suite 703	Washington, DC 20052	www.gwu.edu/~ccps	202/994-7997
Communities in Schools	277 S. Washington St., Suite 210	Alexandria, VA 22314	www.cisnet.org	703/519-8999 800/247-4543
Community Education at FAU	FAU/COE Bldg. 47 rm 260 777 Glades Rd	Boca Raton, FL 33431	www.fau.edu	561/297-3599
Community Tool Box	University of Kansas Health & Community Development	Lawrence, KS 66045	http://ctb.lsi.ukans.edu	785/864-0533
Connect for Kids/ Benton Foundation	950 18th St. NW	Washington, DC 20006	www.connectforkids.org	202/638-5770
Corporation for National Service	Learn and Service America 1201 New York Ave. NW	Washington, DC 20525	www.cns.gov	202/606-5000
David & Lucille Packard Foundation	300 Second St., Suite 200	Los Altos, CA 94022	www.packfound.org www.futureofchildren.org	650/948-7658

ORGANIZATION	ADDRESS	CITY/STATE/ZIP	WWW SITE/URL	PHONE
Do Something	423 West 55th St., 8th Floor	New York, NY 10019	www.dosomething.org	212/523-1175
Education Week	6935 Arlington Road, Suite 100	Bethesda, MD 20814	www.edweek.org	301/280-3100 800/346-1834
Education Commission of the States	707 17th St. #2700	Denver, CO 80202	www.ecs.org	303/299-3600
Educational Development Center	55 Chapel St.	Newton, MA 02458	www.edc.org	617/969-7100
Educational Communication Center	Journal of Educational Relations, Box 657	Camp Hill, PA 17001		717/761-6220
Energize, Inc...Leaders of Volunteers	5450 Wissahickon Ave.	Philadelphia, PA 19144	www.energizeinc.com	215/438-8342
Families and Work Institute	330 Seventh Ave., 14th Floor	New York, NY 10001	www.familiesandwork.org	212/465-2044
Family Resource Coalition of America	20 NW Acker Dr., Suite 1100	Chicago, IL 60606	www.fca.org	312/338-0900
Family Friendly Schools	13080 Brookmead Dr.	Manassas, VA 20112	www.familyfriendlyschools.org	800-658-6082
First Day Foundation	P.O. Box 10	Bennington, VT 05201	www.firstday.org	802/447-9625
George Lucas Educational Foundation	Learn and Live P.O. Box 3494	San Rafael, CA 94912	www.glef.org	415/507-0399
Harvard Family Research Project	38 Concord Ave.	Cambridge, MA 02138	http://gseweb.harvard.edu/~hfrp/	617/495-9108
Home & School Institute	Mega Skills Education Ctr. 1500 Massachusetts Ave., NW	Washington, DC 20005	www.megaskills.org	202/466-3633
Institute for Public Relations	University of Florida Box 118400	Gainesville, FL32611	www.instituteforpr.com	352/392-0280
Institute for Responsive Education	Northeastern University 50 Nightingale Hall	Boston, MA 02115	www.resp-ed.org	617/373-2595
Institute for Educational Leadership	1001 Connecticut Ave. NW, Suite 310	Washington, DC 20036	www.iel.org	202/822-8405
Kettering Foundation	200 Commons Road	Dayton, OH 45459	www.kettering.org	937/434-7300
League of Women Voters	1730 M St. NW, Ste 1000	Washington, DC 20036	www.lwv.org	202/429-1965
Learning First Alliance	1001 Connecticut Ave. NW, Suite 335	Washington, DC 20036	www.learningfirst.org	202/299-5220
National Assn for Family Services	6824 5th St. NW	Washington, DC 20012	www.nafbs.org	202/291-7587
National Assn for Community Leadership	200 S. Meridian St., Suite 250	Indianapolis, IN 46225	www.communityleadership.org	317/637-7408

ORGANIZATION	ADDRESS	CITY/STATE/ZIP	WWW SITE/URL	PHONE
National Association of Community Action Agencies	1100 17th St. NW, Suite 500	Washington, DC 20036	www.nacaa.org	202/265-7546
National Association for the Education of Young Children	1509 16th St. NW	Washington, DC 20036	www.naeyc.org	202/232-8777 800/424-2460
National Association of Elementary School Principals	1615 Duke St.	Alexandria, VA 22314	www.naesp.org	800/386-2377
National Association of Partners in Education	901 North Pitt St., Suite 320	Alexandria,VA 22314	www.napehq.org	703/836-4880
National Association of Secondary School Principals	1904 Association Dr.	Reston, VA 20191	www.nassp.org	703/860-0200
National Center for Fathering	PO Box 413888	Kansas City, MO 64141	www.fathers.com	800/593-3237
National Child Care Information Center	243 Church St. NW, 2nd Floor	Vienna, VA 22180	http://ericps.ed.uiuc.edu/nccic	800/616-2242
National Civic League	1445 Market St., #300	Denver, CO 80202	www.ncl.org	303/571-4343
National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education	3929 Old Lee Highway, Suite 91-A	Fairfax, VA 22030	www.ncpie.org	703/359-8973
National Community Education Association	3929 Old Lee Highway # 91 A	Fairfax, VA 22030	www.ncea.com	703/359-8973
National Criminal Justice Reference Service	Box 6000 2277 Research Blvd	Rockville, MD 20849	www.ncjrs.org	301/519-5063 800/851-3420
National Center for Schools and Communities	Fordham University, 33 W. 60th St., 8th floor	New York NY 10023		212/636-6617
National Center for Strategic Nonprofit Planning and Community Leadership	1133 20th St. NW, Suite 210	Washington, DC 20036	www.npcl.org	888/528-6725
National Center for Community Education	1017 Avon St.	Flint, MI 48503	www.nccenet.org	810/238-0463
National Dropout Prevention Center	Clemson University 209 Martin St	Clemson, SC 29631	www.dropoutprevention.org	864/656-2599
National Education Association	1201 16th St. NW	Washington, DC 20036	www.nea.org	202/833-4000
National Fatherhood Initiative	101 Lake Forest Blvd., Suite 360	Gaithersburg, MD 20877	www.fatherhood.org	301/948-0599
National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities	Academy for Educational Development, PO Box 1492	Washington, DC 20013	www.nichcy.org	800/695-0285 202/884-8200

ORGANIZATION	ADDRESS	CITY/STATE/ZIP	WWW SITE/URL	PHONE
National Institute on Out of School Time	Center for Research on Women Wellesley College, 106 Central St.	Wellesley, MA 02181	www.wellesley.edu/ wcw/crw/sac	781/283-2547
National Mentoring Partnerships	1400 I St. NW, Suite 850	Washington, DC 20005	www.mentoring.org	202/729-4340
National Network for Collaboration	PO Box 5016 ND Univ Extension, 219 FLC	Fargo, ND 58105-5016	http://crs.uvm.edu/nnco	701/231-7253
National Network of Partnership Schools	3003 N. Charles St., Suite 200	Baltimore, MD 21218	http://scov.csos.jhu.edu/p2000	410/516-8800
National Parent Information Network ERIC	Teachers College, Columbia University, 425 W. 120th St.	New York, NY 10027	www.npin.org www.eric-web.tc.columbia.edu	800/601-4868
National PTA	330 N. Wabash Ave., Suite 2100	Chicago, IL 60611	www.pta.org	312/670-6782
National Recreation & Park Association	22377 Belmont Ridge Road	Ashburn, VA 20148	www.activeparks.org	703/858-0784
National Resource Center for Youth Development	University of Oklahoma 202 West Eighth St.	Tulsa, OK 74119	www.nrcys.ou.edu	918/585-2986
Nat'l School Public Relations Association	15948 Derwood Road	Rockville, MD 20855	www.nspra.org	301/519-0496
National School Safety Center	141 Duesenberg Dr., Suite 11	Westlake Village, CA 91362	www.nssc1.org	805/373-9977
National School-Age Care Alliance	1137 Washington St.	Boston, MA 02124	www.nsaca.org	617/298-5012
National Service Learning Clearinghouse	1954 Buford Ave., Room R-460	St. Paul, MN 55108	www.nicsl.jaws.umn.edu	800/808-7378
National Study of School Evaluation	1699 E. Woodfield Rd., Suite 406	Schaumburg, IL 60173	www.nsse.org	847/995-9080
National Youth Leadership Council	1910 West County Road B	St. Paul, MN 55113	www.nylc.org	651/631-3672
Parent Institute	PO Box 7474	Fairfax Station, VA 22039	www.par-inst.com	703/323-9170
Parents as Teachers National Center	10176 Corporate Square Dr., Suite 230	St. Louis, MO 63132	www.patnc.org	314-432-4330
Partnership for Family Involvement in Education	400 Maryland Ave. SW	Washington, DC 20202	www.pfie.ed.gov www.ed.gov	800/872-5327
Phi Delta Kappa International	408 N. Union St., PO Box 789	Bloomington, IN 47402	www.pdkintll.org	800/766-1156 812/339-1156
Public Education Network	601 13th St. NW, Suite 900 North	Washington, DC 20005	www.publiceductaion.org	202/628-7460
Public Agenda ONLINE	6 East 39th St.	New York, NY 10016	www.publicagenda.com	212/686-6610

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

ORGANIZATION	ADDRESS	CITY/STATE/ZIP	WWW SITE/URL	PHONE
Public Relations Society of America	33 Irving Place	New York, NY 10003	www.prsa.org	212/995-2230
School - Age Notes	PO Box 40205	Nashville, TN 37204	www.schoolagenotes.com	615/279-0700
Search Institute	700 S. 3rd St., Suite 210	Minneapolis, MN 55415	www.search-institute.org	612/376-8955 800/888-7828
Study Circles Resource Center	697 Pomfret St., Box 203	Pomfret, CT 06258	www.studycircles.org	860/928-2616
Texas Youth Commission	4900 N. Lamar Blvd	Austin, TX 78751	www.tyc.state.tx.us	512/424-6000
Together We Can Initiative	Inst. for Educational Leadership 1001 Connecticut Ave. NW, Suite 310	Washington, DC 20036	www.togetherwecan.org	202/822-8405
U.S. Department of Education	400 Maryland Ave. SW	Washington, DC 20202	www.ed.gov	800/872-5327
Youth Service America	1101 15th St. NW, Suite 200	Washington, DC 20005	www.servenet.org/ysa	202/296-2992
Youth Today	1200 17th St. NW	Washington, DC 20036	www.youthtoday.org	202/785-0765

APPENDIX 2.
WEB SITES BY MAJOR FOCUS OR CONTENT AREA

AFTERSCHOOL/CHILD CARE

Afterschool.gov Federal Support to Communities	www.afterschool.gov
Center for the Improvement of Child Caring	www.ciccparenting.org
National Child Care Information Center	http://ericps.ed.uiuc.edu/nccic
National Institute on Out of School Time	www.wellesley.edu/wcw/crw/sac
National School-Age Care Alliance	www.nsaca.org
School-Age Notes	www.schoolagenotes.com

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND ORGANIZING

Asset-Based Community Development Institute	www.nwu.edu/IPR
Center for Living Democracy	www.livingdemocracy.org
Community Tool Box	http://ctb.lsi.ukans.edu
National Association of Community Action Agencies	www.nacaa.org
National Association for Community Leadership	www.communityleadership.org
National Center for Strategic Nonprofit Planning and Community Leadership	www.npcl.org

COMMUNITY EDUCATION/COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

Coalition for Community Schools	www.communityschools.org
Community Education at FAU	www.fau.edu
National Community Education Association	www.ncea.com
National Center for Community Education	www.nccenet.org

FOUNDATIONS

Annie E. Casey Foundation	www.aecf.org
Benton Foundation	www.benton.org
Carnegie Corporation of New York	www.carnegie.org
Charles S. Mott Foundation	www.mott.org
Close Up Foundation	www.closeup.org

FOUNDATIONS (cont'd)

Connect for Kids/ Benton Foundation	www.connectforkids.org
David & Lucille Packard Foundation	www.packfound.org www.futureofchildren.org
George Lucas Educational Foundation	www.glef.org
Kettering Foundation	www.kettering.org

NATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

American Association of School Administrators	www.aasa.org
American Federation of Teachers	www.aft.org
Aspira Association	www.aspira.org
Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development	www.ascd.org
National Association of Elementary School Principals	www.naesp.org
National Association for the Education of Young Children	www.naeyc.org
National Association of Secondary School Principals	www.nassp.org
National Education Association	www.nea.org
National Middle School Association	www.nmsa.org
National Recreation & Park Association	www.activeparks.org
National School Boards Association	www.nsba.org

NATIONAL CENTERS OR ORGANIZATIONS

AARP Grandparent Information Center	www.aarp.org
American Institute for Research	www.air-dc.org
Child Trends	www.childtrends.org
Children's Defense Fund	www.chilrensdefense.org
Coalition for America's Children	www.uaskids.org
Communitarian Network	www.gwu.edu/~ccps
Education Week	www.edweek.org
Education Commission of the States	www.ecs.org
Educational Development Center	www.edc.org
Institute for Educational Leadership	www.iel.org
League of Women Voters	www.lwv.org
Learning First Alliance	www.learningfirst.org
National Head Start Association	www.nhsa.org

NATIONAL CENTERS OR ORGANIZATIONS (cont'd)

National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities	www.nichcy.org
National Study of School Evaluation	www.nsse.org
National Urban League	www.nul.org
Phi Delta Kappa International	www.pdkintll.org
Public Education Network	www.publiceducation.org
Public Agenda ONLINE	www.publicagenda.com
Reading Is Fundamental	www.rif.org
Study Circles Resource Center	www.studycircles.org

PARENT/FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

Alliance for Parental Involvement in Education	www.croton.com/allpie
Center for Law and Education	www.cleweb.org
Colorado Parent Information and Resource Center	www.cpirc.org
Family Friendly Schools	www.familyfriendlyschools.org
First Day Foundation	www.firstday.org
Home & School Institute	www.megaskills.org
Institute for Responsive Education	www.resp-ed.org
National Fatherhood Initiativn	www.fatherhood.org
National Center for Fathering	www.fathers.com
National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education	www.ncpie.org
National Parent Information Network ERIC	www.npin.org www.eric-web.tc.columbia.edu
National PTA	www.pta.org
Parent Institute	www.par-inst.com
Parental Assistance Coordination Center	www.mcfarlandwired.com/pacc
Parents as Teachers National Center	www.patnc.org
Parents for Public Schools	www.parents4publicschools.com

PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION

Center for Effective Collaborative and Practice	www.air-dc.org/cecp
Communities in Schools	www.cisnet.org
Families and Advocates Partnerships for Education	www.fape.org
National Association of Partnership in Education	www.napehq.org

PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION (Cont'd)

National Network of Partnership Schools	http://scov.csos.jhu.edu/p2000
National Network for Collaboration	http://crs.uvm.edu/nnco
Partnership for Family Involvement in Education	www.pfie.ed.gov www.ed.gov
Together We Can Intitiative	www.togetherwecan.org

PUBLIC RELATIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS

A-Plus Communications	www.apluscommunications.com
Institute for Public Relations	www.instituteforpr.com
National School Public Relations Association	www.nspra.org
Public Relations Society of America	www.prsa.org

SCHOOL SAFETY AND CRISIS MANAGEMENT

Center for the Prevention of School Violence	www.ncsu.edu/cpsv
National Criminal Justice Reference Service	www.ncjrs.org
National School Safety Center	www.nsscl.org

SCHOOL REFORM

Annenberg Institute for School Reform	www.aisi.brown.edu
Center for Education Reform	www.edreform.com
Comer School Development Program	http://info.med.yale.edu/comer
School of the 21st Century	www.yale.edu/bushcenter/21c

SERVICE LEARNING AND CITIZENSHIP

Center for Civic Education	www.civiced.org
Center for Democracy & Citizenship	www.hhh.umn.edu
Civic Practices Network	www.cpn.org
Corporation for National Service	www.cns.gov
National Civic League	www.ncl.org
National Drop Out Prevention Center	www.dropoutprevention.org
National Service Learning Clearinghouse	www.nicsl.jaws.umn.edu
National Youth Leadership Council	www.nycl.org
Youth Service America	www.servenet.org/ysa

VOLUNTEERS

Association for Volunteer Administration	www.avaintl.org
Energize, Inc...Leaders of Volunteers	www.energizeinc.com
National Mentoring Partnerships	www.mentoring.org

YOUTH/FAMILY ORGANIZATIONS

America's Promise	www.americaspromise.org
Children, Youth, and Family Consortium	www.cyfc.umu.edu
Communities in Schools	www.cisnet.org
Do Something	www.dosomething.org
Families and Work Institute	www.familiesandwork.org
Family Education Company	www.familyeducation.com
Family Resource Coalition of America	www.fica.org
Harvard Family Research Project	http://gseweb.harvard.edu/~hfrp/
National Association for Family Services	www.nafbs.org
National Center for Family Literacy	www.famlit.org
National Resource Center for Youth Development	www.nrcys.ou.edu
Search Institute	www.search-institute.org
Texas Youth Commission	www.tyc.state.tx.us
Youth Today	www.youthtoday.org

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

LARRY E. DECKER is the Charles Stewart Mott Professor, an Eminent Scholar Chair in Community Education, at Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton. He was formerly director of the Mid-Atlantic Center for Community Education, professor of educational leadership, and associate dean at the Curry School of Education, University of Virginia. He earned his Ph.D. at Michigan State University. A leading spokesperson for the community education/community school movement, he is the author of numerous publications that address educational reform and strengthening the collaboration of home, school, and community for educational success.

VIRGINIA A. DECKER is managing editor of Community Collaborators, Boca Raton, Florida. She was formerly the facilitator of the National Community Education Computer Network, an international teleconferencing system; a research assistant with the Bureau of Business and Economic Research at the University of Oregon, and an instructor at Lane Community College in Eugene, Oregon. She earned her MBA from the University of Oregon. She has co-authored a number of publications on grantseeking, family and community involvement, and educational planning and reform.

MARY RICHARDSON BOO, a longtime advocate of community education and community schools, was director of communications for the National Community Education Association for ten years. Now retired, she continues to edit and write on the subjects of community involvement and lifelong learning.

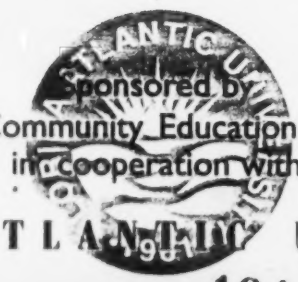
GLORIA A. GREGG is head of the Department of Education at Montana State University, Bozeman and has been the director of the Center for Community-School Development for the past 20 years. She was formerly a public school teacher and community school director. Her Ed.D. is from Western Michigan University. She has co-authored several books on parent and family involvement and has an extensive background in the development of community education programs in rural areas.

JOANNE ERICKSON is an assistant professor of Educational Leadership at Montana State University, Bozeman. She earned her doctorate from Montana State University. She formerly worked for the Montana Office of Public Instruction in the area of adult education and was a principal and assistant superintendent in Havre Public Schools in Montana.

For questions or feedback on this publication, contact:

Larry Decker
FAU/COE
777 Glades Road
Boca Raton, FL 33431
561-297-3599
ldecker@fau.edu

123



Sponsored by
National Community Education Association
in cooperation with

FLORIDA ATLANTIC UNIVERSITY